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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF David Eugene Armontrout for the Master of Arts in History
presented November 13, 1992.

Title: John F. Kennedy: A Political Biography on Education.

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


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In what is historically a brief number of years, the life and times of John F. Kennedy have taken on legendary proportions. His presidency began with something less than a mandate from the American people, but he brought to the White House an inspiration and a style that offered great promises of things to come.

This study provides a political biography of John F. Kennedy and education. In addition, it investigates the records of past presidents and congresses, as well as the school aid lobby. This account also draws upon the vast body of historical, educational, and political material on John Kennedy. Chapter I traces Kennedy's record on federal aid as a Congressman (1947-1953) and Senator (1953-1960). Chapter II focuses on the role federal aid to education played during the 1960 presidential campaign. The chapter will examine the

statements of both candidates and party platforms regarding the future role of the federal government in education. In addition, the history and role of the National Education Association in past presidential administrations will be discussed. Chapter III examines the "New Frontier" and Kennedy's use of the Hovde Task Force on Education to define policies for the new administration. The approach of previous presidential administrations is examined and the model which John Kennedy chose to follow. Chapter III provides an analysis of Kennedy's successful attempt to enlarge the House Rules Committee. An early test for Kennedy, it proved to be a costly victory for the new administration. Chapter IV offers a critical analysis of the Kennedy Education Bill of 1961. It also investigates the absence of any strategy to bridge the gulf between the administration and the federal aid interest groups, the Catholic Church, and Congress. Chapter V contains three sections: The first examines the failure of the 1961 Education Bill and how President Kennedy and his administration viewed that failure. The second section illustrates the effect the failed 1961 Education Bill had on the Kennedy Administration. There would be no general education bill proposed by the administration in 1962, but the beginning of a shift to advance a bill for aid to higher education. The third section focuses on the omnibus bill for 1963 which contained provisions for aid to public schools. Despite this, by 1963, the school aid provision had become a victim of the continuing religious question (aid to parochial schools) and the conflict over civil rights (aid to segregated schools). The 1963 federal aid to public schools also reflected the pragmatic concerns of the Kennedy Administration to pass anything regarding education. Finally, Chapter V offers final insights into the failure of the Kennedy Administration to secure federal aid to elementary and secondary education. Ultimately, the blame rests with President Kennedy for his unwillingness or inability to stand behind his promises and use his popularity to advance the public school aid cause.

**JOHN F. KENNEDY:
A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY ON EDUCATION**

**by
DAVID EUGENE ARMONTROUT**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

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in
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1992

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Americans have regarded education as the keystone of the American democratic experience. Indeed, federal involvement in education pre-dates the Constitution. It was explicitly encouraged by the Congress of the Confederation in the Survey Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Beginning with the admission of Ohio in 1802, the federal government adopted the Northwest Ordinance policy to the region's new states, allocating land for the support of public schools. Federal assistance was extended to higher education by the Morrill Act of 1862 and was further reinforced in 1890 by the Second Morrill Act, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. These laws funded the new land-grant colleges for the expansion of agricultural curriculum and provided for mechanical-vocational training and home economics programs in high schools. The Second World War brought the "impacted" aid of the Lanham Act of 1940 for school districts overburdened by non-taxed military installations, and the G.I. Bill was passed in 1944. The Cold War brought about the National Science Foundation Act of 1950 and, in response to *Sputnik*, the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (NDEA). These were established to stimulate education in science, engineering, foreign languages, and mathematics. The federal government was clearly willing to provide categorical aid in times of national crisis. But attempts to enact more general aid programs became a hostage of constitutional objections, the church-state issue, fear of

local control, partisan disputes, and in the 1950s, the controversy over school desegregation.

When John F. Kennedy entered the White House on January 20, 1961, he believed the nation had reached a consensus on domestic politics. Kennedy shared with a majority of the public and the Congress, as well as several major educational groups, the desire for federal financial assistance to the nation's schools, colleges, and universities. Yet at the time of his death, two years, ten months later, his administration had failed to secure such aid. The procedural, religious, and racial considerations acquired such visibility so as to render federal aid a non-educational issue.

This study provides a political biography of John F. Kennedy and education. In addition, it investigates the records of past presidents and congresses, as well as the school aid lobby. This account also draws upon the vast body of historical, educational, and political material on John Kennedy. Chapter I traces Kennedy's record on federal aid as a Congressman (1947-1953) and Senator (1953-1960). Chapter II focuses on the role federal aid to education played during the 1960 presidential campaign. The chapter will examine the statements of both candidates and party platforms regarding the future role of the federal government in education. In addition, the history and role of the National Education Association in past presidential administrations will be discussed. Chapter III examines the "New Frontier" and Kennedy's use of the Hovde Task Force on Education to define policies for the new administration. The approach of previous presidential administrations is examined and the model which John Kennedy chose to follow. Chapter III provides an analysis of Kennedy's successful attempt to enlarge the House Rules Committee. An early test for Kennedy, it proved to be a costly victory for the new administration. Chapter IV offers a critical analysis of the Kennedy Education Bill

of 1961. It also investigates the absence of any strategy to bridge the gulf between the administration and the federal aid interest groups, the Catholic Church, and Congress. Chapter V contains three sections: The first examines the failure of the 1961 Education Bill and how President Kennedy and his administration viewed that failure. The second section illustrates the effect the failed 1961 Education Bill had on the Kennedy Administration. There would be no general education bill proposed by the administration in 1962, but the beginning of a shift to advance a bill for aid to higher education. The third section focuses on the omnibus bill for 1963 which contained provisions for aid to public schools. Despite this, by 1963, the school aid provision had become a victim of the continuing religious question (aid to parochial schools) and the conflict over civil rights (aid to segregated schools). The 1963 federal aid to public schools also reflected the pragmatic concerns of the Kennedy Administration to pass anything regarding education. Finally, Chapter V offers final insights into the failure of the Kennedy Administration to secure federal aid to elementary and secondary education. Ultimately, the blame rests with President Kennedy for his inability to provide the determined and forceful leadership to advance the public school aid cause.

JFK--HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (1946-1952)

Leadership on federal aid would be an unfamiliar position for John Kennedy. Prior to Kennedy's decision to run for the Presidency, other legislators had seized the initiative on educational issues. From the struggles of an undistinguished academic career and an uneven legislative performance, Kennedy cultivated the dedication to educational opportunity in his march to the White House.

Twenty-nine year old John Kennedy won election to the House of Representatives in 1946 in what has been described as a "crazy quilt district mainly consisting of Irish and Italians living in eleven wards of Cambridge, three wards of Somerville, and one ward of Brighton, Charleston, Boston, and East Boston."¹ Kennedy entered Congress as a member of the minority party: the Republicans won control of both houses. Kennedy became a member of the Education and Labor Committee. This assignment, while unusual for a freshman, was the consequence of no great lobbying effort by Kennedy. His selection came without his "trying very hard, or thinking much about it, or without knowing too much about the subject. . . ."² The Kennedy appointment did not stem from any exceptional devotion to education in his campaign. Kennedy's 1946 platform called housing the most pressing issue. There was no mention of education.³

Congressman Kennedy approached the issue of federal aid to education cautiously, suggesting "first, that there must be a clear demonstration of actual need for such aid and this need finally having been demonstrated . . . that all children should derive some benefit."⁴ In a WMEX radio forum in Boston, April 12, 1947, Kennedy explained:

I favor federal aid. I oppose federal control. By federal control I mean any federal action *whatsoever* with respect to the curriculum . . . or the selection of teachers . . . or the conditions under which schools shall be operated. . . . I

¹Joan and Clay Blair, Jr., *The Search for JFK* (Boston, Putnam and Sons, 1976), pp. 424-425.

²James MacGregor Burns, *John Kennedy: A Political Profile* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1959), p. 24.

³1946 Kennedy Campaign Platform, Pre-Presidential Papers, House Files, 1946, 1952 Campaign Files, Box 98, JFK Papers, JFKL.

⁴"Reardon's 1952 Compilation," Personal Papers, Box 1, JFK Papers, JFKL.

am not greatly disturbed by the argument that federal aid means federal control.⁵

Representative Kennedy was one of four Democrats on the ten-member Subcommittee Number One, on Measures Relating to Education Generally, chaired by Republican Edward McCowen of Ohio. The subcommittee held hearings on thirteen bills dealing with federal aid to education during April and May of 1947.⁶ Many of the measures were similar and were merely presented to indicate a strong backing for federal aid in principle. Others were presented because an individual felt aid should be given in a particular way or meet a specific need. Some of these proposals were given careful consideration, while others were not even read.

Of all these measures, the two most important were S.472 and H.R. 2953. Senator Robert Taft was the leading sponsor of the former, and Chairman McCowen submitted the latter. These bills were very similar. Each provided a minimum annual expenditure of forty dollars for each student. The bills also included provisions designed to prevent federal control of state school systems. In so doing, they intentionally passed the decision concerning aid to parochial schools on to the states. Both of these proposals contained the necessary ingredients for an eventual law. They provided money which was needed, and at the same time avoided many of the controversial issues which had defeated previous attempts at such legislation.

⁵Ibid, p. 44.

⁶John Muncie, "The Struggle to Obtain Federal Aid for Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1940-1965" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Kent State University, 1969), p. 72.

The Senate subcommittee voted unanimously to bring out a bill for federal aid during that session. S.472, with an amendment raising the minimum expenditure per child to \$50, was reported to the Senate on July 3, 1947.⁷

Action was not so positive in the House subcommittee. On May 15th, Chairman McCowen denied rumors that aid to education was to be killed on orders from Republican leadership.⁸ Whether orders were given to kill the bill or not, no aid bill was reported out of the House subcommittee during the first session of the Eightieth Congress.

These hearings are memorable for their exposition of Kennedy's views on aid to parochial schools. The testimony of Rev. William E. McManus, Assistant Director of the Department of Education of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, provided Kennedy with a political opportunity which he quickly seized. McManus' statements reflected the NCWC position of cautious support for federal aid, conditioned by equity among the states and, as was constitutionally permissible, between public and non-public schools.⁹ Congressman Kennedy, representative of a predominantly Catholic district, could not oppose the argument of his church's hierarchy. Yet for those non-Catholics in his district, he asserted some autonomy by differing with McManus' argument that only the poorer states, and not Massachusetts, needed federal help. "Is it not a fact," asked Kennedy,

⁷*Congressional Record*, 80th Congress, 1st Session, 1947, Vol. XCIII, p. 8205.

⁸Muncie, p. 82.

⁹Lawrence John McAndrews, "Broken Ground: John F. Kennedy and the Politics of Education," Volumes I and II (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1985), p. 40.

"that some of the states such as Massachusetts are having a difficult time financing their school systems?"¹⁰

Later in the day, Kennedy's response to the testimony of Sarah Walsh of the National Teachers Division of the Congress of Industrial Organizations reinforced his support of flat educational grants to rich and poor states alike. "I question whether we as a wealthy state can afford to give much of our money to the Southern states when we ourselves are being taxed heavily," said Kennedy. He suggested, ". . . if we are going to give our money then we should have the right to insist that other states tax certainly the equivalent of what Massachusetts does."¹¹

Kennedy's statements regarding the church on the equalization question did not satisfy everyone. Elmer E. Rogers, Associate Editor of the *Scottish Rite Publications*, testified against any federal aid to parochial schools. He also claimed that Catholic parents faced excommunication if they did not send their children to these institutions. Kennedy replied, "I never went to a parochial school. I am a Catholic and yet my parents were never debarred from the sacrament, so the statement is wrong." When Rogers contended that an American Catholic's allegiance to the Vatican preceded his loyalty to his country, Kennedy angrily replied: "I think that when you make such statements and charges, you should know what you are talking about. . . . There is an old saying in Boston that 'We get our religion from Rome and our politics at home'"¹²

¹⁰"Federal Aid to Education: Hearings Before Subcommittee Number One of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives," 80th Congress, 1st Session, April 29-May 29, 1947, p. 169.

¹¹*Ibid*, p. 169.

¹²*Ibid*, p. 169.

This particular witness had been somewhat discredited and the force taken from his testimony. It would not be such a simple matter to dismiss the strength of the pressure groups behind such men. These hearings served as Kennedy's indoctrination in the *religious issue*, which would never leave the education debate, or Kennedy himself.

Though the "do nothing" Congress lived up to its reputation in the field of education, Congressman Kennedy had provided a glimpse of positions he had not previously felt compelled to take. He pronounced himself on the side of federal aid to public elementary and secondary education. He considered the notion of individual tax reductions for educational expenses. He favored federal assistance to parochial schools. He expressed misgivings about allocating federal funds to help pay the salaries of public school teachers.

Kennedy easily gained reelection to the House in 1948. He returned to find it a different place as the Democratic Party had recaptured the Congress. The Democratic victory brought many new faces to Washington, thus increasing the stature of incumbent Democrats. In 1949, Kennedy capitalized on this situation by introducing his first and only education bill as a member of the House of Representatives. H.R. 5838 authorized \$300,000,000 a year of federal aid to the states for "any current educational expense of the state school system."¹³ A separate title of the bill would set aside ten percent of each state's allotment for auxiliary services such as bus transportation, health services, textbooks for private and parochial schools.

Kennedy based his proposal on the "child benefit" theory which the Supreme Court had ruled in the *Everson* case in 1946. This theory holds, "while the Constitution prohibits direct federal aid to non-public schools, it permits assistance in the form of

¹³"Reardon's 1952 Compilation," Box 1, Personal Papers, JFKL.

public welfare benefits to children of those schools."¹⁴ Kennedy emphasized the provision of the bill which "makes it possible for the government to enter into contracts with those schools to reimburse them for fifty percent of their actual expenses incurred in supplying these services."¹⁵

The Kennedy bill was a reaction to legislation proposed by Education Subcommittee Chairman Graham Barden, Democrat, from North Carolina. The Barden bill had been a response to the Thomas bill which had passed the Senate. The bill contained three items which were unacceptable to Kennedy. First, it called for federal aid to all states with no requirement that the *poor* states make a greater effort to improve their educational establishments. Second, it prohibited any form of federal aid to parochial schools. Third, it permitted federal expenditures for racially segregated schools.

The Kennedy bill was a popular "gesture . . . but was clearly doomed in a chamber and also a committee that had been historically hostile to federal aid to education."¹⁶ Not surprisingly, the Kennedy bill died in committee when the first session of the Eighty-First Congress adjourned.

At the outset of the second House session in 1950, Kennedy took a different tack. With the help of Education and Labor Committee chairman John Lesinski and the U.S. Office of Education, he devised an amendment to the Senate bill. It provided that in states whose constitutions permitted such expenditures, a portion of federal education

¹⁴McAndrews, p. 44.

¹⁵Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁶Hugh Davis Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph: Federal Education Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Years* (University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 4.

funds would pay the cost of transportation of nonpublic school pupils. In those states which prohibited the use of funds, the Office of Education would finance not more than fifty percent of the transportation expenses. On March 7, 1950, the amendment lost by a 16-9 committee vote.¹⁷

On March 18, 1950, the *Boston Pilot*, the newspaper of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, hailed the brave efforts of its Congressman. Despite Kennedy's unsuccessful three-year campaign for federally funded "auxiliary services," for non-public school students, the *Pilot* concluded he stood "as a white knight against the crepuscular haze."¹⁸

Congressman Kennedy had four opportunities to vote on education issues on the floor of the House. In 1950, Kennedy was in the majority which passed the impacted area aid bills which became Public Laws 815 and 874, the Housing Act which provided the loans for college housing construction, and the bill which created the National Science Foundation to promote research and scientific education. That same year, however, Kennedy was in the minority in voting to recommit a public service demonstration act which provided \$163 million to the states for library services. "The true function of the National Government," said Kennedy in the floor debate, "is to do what the people in the various states cannot do themselves. There is no state in the Union that cannot afford to pay \$40,000 a year for library services."¹⁹ Interestingly, none of Kennedy's biographers make an assessment of his votes during the 1950 legislative session of Congress.

¹⁷"Reardon's 1952 Compilation," Box 1, Personal Papers, JFKL, pp. 49-50.

¹⁸"Reardon's 1952 Compilation," Box 1, Personal Papers, JFKL.

¹⁹*Congressional Record*, March 9, 1950, p. 3129.

JFK--THE SENATE (1953-1960)

Kennedy was elected to the Senate in 1952, following a tough race with Henry Cabot Lodge. The campaign focused primarily on state and local issues and therefore paid little attention to federal aid to education. The campaign also marked a transition from Kennedy's previous political campaigns. Kennedy's Senate campaign saw the emergency of Lawrence O'Brien's organizational abilities which would prove to be crucial in future campaigns. But the most important was the emergence of Robert Kennedy whose energy, organizational ability, and loyalty proved invaluable. After entering the Senate, Kennedy would be joined by Ted Sorensen, whose contributions would help shape future Kennedy domestic legislative proposals.

Senator Kennedy was appointed to the Labor and Public Welfare Committee, which handled educational legislation. The bitterness from the 1950 House Education and Labor Committee rejection of federal aid legislation, the Korean War emergency, the actions of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and the election of a Republican President and Congress combined to keep education issues in the background of the Eighty-Third Congress.

A proposal to use *oil for education* as a way to bring federal aid through the side door, met with Kennedy's approval, but Congressional defeat. He urged the federal government to use money from off-shore oil for the construction of schools and hospitals, a position generally led in the Senate by Lister Hill of Alabama. On April 27, 1953, Kennedy voted with the minority against a motion by Senator Robert Taft to table a bill providing for federal control of submerged lands past three miles; joint federal-state control up to three miles; and use of federal resources for offshore oil to aid education. On May 5, Kennedy backed the losing Lehman Amendment giving federal control of

submerged lands and resources in the Continental Shelf, with the revenues earmarked for education. He also supported the unsuccessful Neely Amendment which called for federal control over the same lands, with education sharing the income with disabled veterans benefits and the reduction of the national debt. On June 24th, Kennedy co-sponsored a bill which directed Continental Shelf receipts first to national defense and then to education. The measure passed the Senate, but when the Senate-House conference committee eliminated the education provision, Kennedy voted no in a losing cause. Kennedy resurrected the oil-for-education concept on April 1, 1954, but it died in the Interior Committee.²⁰

In a letter to the President dated April 1, 1953, Kennedy protested the Eisenhower Administration's proposed \$75 million reduction in the school lunch program. While "sympathetic to all reasonable attempts . . . to effect economy in government," wrote Senator Kennedy, ". . . I do feel that . . . general across-the-board cuts in funds in such a vital area as this lunch program are ill-advised."²¹ Kennedy also co-sponsored a school construction bill which emerged from the Labor and Public Welfare Committee of July 9, 1954, but never came to a floor vote.

The election of Dwight D. Eisenhower to the Presidency in 1952 had signalled a change in American politics--"a return, in effect, to the Republican 'normalcy' after twenty years of Democratic activism."²² By 1956, a new generation of Democrats led by Adlai Stevenson were preparing to claim national recognition. A new postwar brand of political

²⁰McAndrews, p. 51.

²¹*Congressional Record*, 83rd Congress, 1st Session, 1967, Appendix, p. A.

²²Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1965), p. 14.

leadership was beginning to emerge with Kennedy in the vanguard. A new generation Democrat, he was burdened neither by strong partisanship nor identifications with past policies. John Kennedy had been one of its first members to enter politics. Kennedy's bid for the vice-presidential nomination at the 1956 Democratic National Convention brought him for the first time toward the center of national consciousness. Campaigning for his party took Kennedy to 140 public appearances in twenty-six states that year. Though narrowly losing the vice-presidential nomination to Estes Kefauver, "it became increasingly clear that the vice-presidential nomination would not satisfy him the next time around."²³ He returned to the Senate reveling in the excitement of media speculation, but also determined to win reelection to a second term in 1958.

On January 28, 1958, Senator Kennedy introduced a \$300 million, five year school construction program. It was a program with matching grants focusing on these areas with critical classroom shortages. The funds would be distributed "according to each state's school-age population, with supplemental federal loans to school financing agencies and federal purchase of school bonds."²⁴ Kennedy criticized Eisenhower for "abandoning" school construction in his effort to pass the defense education bill. He also warned that the national classroom shortage, if ignored, would become "the major crisis facing education in the 1960's."²⁵ He took the same position in an article in the *NEA Journal* in January 1958. The Kennedy proposal received, however, no consideration by the Labor and Public Welfare Committee. This was due primarily to a bill (S.3163) introduced by Republican Alexander Smith of New Jersey which sought to implement the

²³Ibid, p. 19.

²⁴McAndrews, p. 53.

²⁵*Congressional Record*, January 28, 1958, p. 1158.

education proposals of the Eisenhower administration. By 1958, the President had given up recommending the program for school construction which he had advocated during the three previous years. The President, responding to the Soviet launching of Sputnik the previous October, along with the prior defeats of his program had shifted his emphasis to "areas of education closely related to national security."²⁶ The National Defense Education Act, enacted in September of 1958, would become one of the Eisenhower administration's most noteworthy achievements.

In the committee majority report on the defense education bill, Kennedy joined fellow Democrats Pat McNamara of Michigan, Wayne Morse of Oregon, and James Murray of Montana, along with Republican John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky in pleading for "a broad program of financial assistance to enable the states to attack their serious education problems at the primary and secondary level."²⁷ This recommendation became the McNamara bill. It was a billion dollar, two year school construction amendment to the National Defense Education Act of 1958. The amendment was defeated by a 61-30 vote because many senators were afraid it would kill the defense education bill in the House. The NDEA, which Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson proudly referred to as "an historic landmark . . . of this or any other session,"²⁸ passed the Senate on August 13, 1958, with Kennedy on the winning side. In 1959, Pennsylvania Democrat Joseph Clark, along with co-sponsor Kennedy,

²⁶Muncie, p. 141.

²⁷"The Fate of the Nation," *National Education Association Journal*, XLVII, January 1958, pp. 10-11.

²⁸"Individual Views, National Defense Act of 1958, Report of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Senate," August 8, 1958, p. 48.

attempted to revive the construction amendment. It failed on September 14th of the same year.

The passage of the National Defense Act raised the question of the role of federal aid to education. Born out of the Soviet launching of Sputnik on October 4, 1957, it forced a consensus that Soviet superiority in science and education should be matched by federal funding of higher education. Would the short-term assistance to higher education in a Cold War crisis generate momentum toward a permanent federal role in education? If so, how would such a role affect elementary and secondary schools. With the 1958 congressional by-elections bringing the Democrats 48 new seats in the House and 15 in the Senate, they were presented with an opportunity to embarrass the Eisenhower-Nixon administration and capture the White House in 1960. In a sense, the presidential campaign of 1960 "began when the Eighty-Sixth Congress convened on January 7, 1959, and an aid-to-education bill was to figure prominently in Democratic strategy."²⁹

Kennedy supported Senator McNamara's two-year school construction program, which reached the floor of the Senate in February of 1960. Senator Clark offered an amendment to the bill authorizing the expenditure of federal funds for teacher salaries. A conservative coalition of southern Democrats and Republicans on the House Rules Committee blocked a conference committee vote on the bill which President Eisenhower would have vetoed anyway. The result of this maneuvering forced Vice-President and certain GOP presidential nominee Richard Nixon to break the 44 to 44 tie in the Senate by voting against the amendment. As Hugh Davis Graham wrote, Nixon would thereby

²⁹Graham, p. 5.

"earn the enmity and the Democrats would earn the appreciation of the National Education Association's three-quarters-of-a-million voting teachers and their families."³⁰

Yet realizing that much of the opposition to his salary amendment was its expense and its permanence, Senator Clark reduced the price of the proposal to \$20 per child and its duration to two years. A second Clark amendment, again calling for federal aid to teacher's salaries, passed 54-35. Kennedy supported both Clark amendments, but voted against an addition served by Clark and Wayne Morse to permit low-interest loans for non-public school construction. Kennedy explained his vote "arose as the result of a hastily drafted amendment which would only have added to the general confusion on the subject of civil rights. . . . Procedurally, it seemed like a vote in favor of segregated schools."³¹ Kennedy was the only one of twelve Catholic senators to oppose the amendment. The House ruled the teachers' salaries and non-public school issues "non-germane," thereby preventing a future vote.

The years 1959-1960 also saw Kennedy co-sponsor legislation to provide tax breaks for the parents of college students and to establish a National Advisory Commission on Education. Kennedy, along with other federal aid partisans, watched as neither bill came to a vote. However, on August 13, 1959, Kennedy joined with the majority, which passed the Korean G.I. Bill extending educational benefits to men in military service between 1955 and 1963.

Kennedy also became more outspoken on the issue of civil rights, even though Massachusetts had relatively few blacks. Kennedy supported Eisenhower's decision to

³⁰Ibid, p. 6.

³¹Letter from John F. Kennedy to Francis Reagan, March 3, 1960, Pre-Presidential Papers, Box 733, JFKL.

send federal troops to enforce school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. He was among the Senate minority who voted to add Title III to the Civil Rights Act of 1957. This enabled the Attorney General to "protect through injunctive relief, all civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution [including desegregated schools]."³²

In a speech at the 1959 convocation of the United Negro College Fund, Kennedy declared, "The unanimous decision of the Supreme Court five years ago tolled the end of the era of segregation facilities." In his remarks, Kennedy also sought to equate the problem of civil rights and education in America. The "Negro colleges and universities share the general crisis of American education at the same time they face a special crisis of their own."³³

An examination of John Kennedy's career during these years shows a transformation in his position on education issues. Congressman Kennedy was devoted to his constituents and took a *safe* position on education issues. Despite his professed support for federal aid, he opposed the Barden general aid bill. His vote against the Burke Amendment demonstrated his resistance to federal aid for teachers' salaries. At the University of Notre Dame, January 29, 1950, Kennedy admonished the "ever-expanding power of the federal government, the absorption of many of the functions that cities and states once considered to be responsibilities of their own."³⁴ In a speech during his 1952 Senatorial campaign, Kennedy declared, "I can think of nothing of greater

³²"Record of John F. Kennedy on Civil Rights and Race Relations," Pre-Presidential Papers, 1960 Campaign Files, Box 1029, JFK Papers, JFKL.

³³Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy, 1959 Convocation of United Negro College Fund, Indianapolis, Indiana, April 12, 1959, Pre-Presidential Papers, 1960 Campaign Files, Box 1029, JFK Papers, JFKL.

³⁴"Commencement Address of John F. Kennedy at the University of Notre Dame," January 29, 1950, Pre-Presidential Papers, House files, Box 94, JFK Papers, JFKL.

concern . . . than a reduction in the rate of government spending and . . . the burden of Federal taxation."³⁵ Such warnings of federal control were not the remarks of a champion of federal aid. Kennedy entered the Senate as a man associated with the cause of Catholic education rather than that of national education.

It was in Senator Kennedy's first term that he sought a balance between constituent and interest group pressures and a national agenda. While it is not easy to separate the role of Senator from Presidential aspirant, there did emerge as one close observer of Kennedy's views on education noted, late in his second term many new positions on education which "seemed to owe at least as much to Presidential ambition as to Senatorial deliberation."³⁶

In 1950, Kennedy had opposed the enactment of the Library Services Act. A decade later, he sponsored a bill to extend it five years. The candidate who campaigned for a balanced budget in 1952, wrote of education legislation in 1958, ". . . this is one area in which we must not [be] obsessed with budget balancing."³⁷ As a Representative and Senator, Kennedy had supported *auxiliary services* for non-public schools, but as a Presidential candidate, he contended the question should be decided on the basis of state and local laws. On the other hand, though, his initial opposition in the House against federal aid for teachers' salaries persisted until January 1960, when Senator Kennedy cast two votes for the Clark teacher's salaries amendments to the McNamara bill.

³⁵"Economy Speech," Pre-Presidential Papers, 1952 Campaign Files, Box 99, JFK Papers, JFKL.

³⁶McAndrews, p. 61.

³⁷Ibid, p. 62.

Kennedy also dropped his insistence on temporary federal aid. He had been initially apprehensive about a permanent federal role in education. In introducing his school construction bill in January, 1958, Kennedy announced "the emergency role of the federal government [in education] is a temporary one."³⁸ As late as December, 1958, Senator Kennedy had resisted the appeals of the National Education Association to co-sponsor the 1959 Murray-Metcalf permanent support bill. By 1960, presidential candidate Kennedy had changed his position, and his vote that year for the first Clark Amendment was the opening volley in his aggressive campaign for permanent federal support to education.

Kennedy also made a swift, yet less dramatic alteration of his views on federal aid to higher education. In late 1958, Kennedy felt federal scholarships were not of the highest priority, while supporting only a limited number of such grants. By the 1960 campaign, Kennedy had elevated scholarships to the same level as school construction.

Why had Kennedy relinquished many of the positions he held as a Congressman and Senator? One possible answer is that Kennedy would have problems gathering liberal support in the Democratic Party convention of 1960. Also, by the late 1950s, Kennedy has moved closer to the positions of liberal senators on a number of issues, including welfare issues, civil rights, and civil liberties. In 1959, for example, he worked to secure the repeal of the National Defense Education Act clause requiring students to sign a loyalty oath if they wanted loans for college. Yet even some close friends and admirers believed that he did so to remove the taint of his earlier conduct regarding Joe

³⁸*Congressional Record*, January 28, 1958.

McCarthy, the notorious anti-Communist crusader. It became, as Kennedy's pre-presidential biographer, James MacGregor Burns, wrote, "the issue that would not die."³⁹

Kennedy's previous actions regarding Senator McCarthy were mixed. He had voted both for and against funds for McCarthy's investigative activities and had taken no political stand. Family pressures remained strong against Kennedy tangling with McCarthy. After John's election to the Senate, his brother Robert went to work for McCarthy's committee as chief counsel. John remarked that he could not "holler about what McCarthy had done in 1952 or 1951 when my brother had been on the staff in 1953. That is really the guts of the matter."⁴⁰ And, unquestionably, Joseph P. Kennedy was opposed to his son's participation in any kind of censure move.

In 1954, when the Senate was considering whether to censure McCarthy, Kennedy was recovering from near fatal back surgery in New York. As Kennedy biographer Herbert Parmet has written, "cynics would always suspect the timing of Jack Kennedy's entrance to the New York Hospital for Special Surgery."⁴¹ Many felt that the large McCarthy following in Massachusetts would allow Kennedy to "choose the particular moment of the McCarthy debate to be hospitalized."⁴² Although unable, physically, to vote on the final censure, Kennedy had not made the flat denunciation of McCarthy that liberals demanded. Burns concludes that the McCarthy era "may have contributed to the maturing and deepening of Kennedy's own liberalism. But if so, neither he nor the

³⁹Burns, p. 131.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 152.

⁴¹Parmet, p. 307.

⁴²Ibid, p. 308.

liberals would admit to it."⁴³ By July 1960, Kennedy, who seven years earlier had urged his party to "seize the middle of the road," held positions on education mirroring those of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action.

Despite his many changes of position, John Kennedy's attraction to education issues remained constant throughout his congressional career. While not being a creative legislator, he served on committees charged with oversight of educational issues in both houses and the Education Subcommittee in the House. Though seldom a participant in floor debate, he introduced or co-sponsored significant education legislation. Education would become an issue in the 1960 election because Kennedy felt it was important. In addition, historically the Democratic Party had responded to the pressure for aid to education, while the Republican Party had been slow to respond.

⁴³Burns, p. 154.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION AS AN ISSUE IN THE 1960 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

As a presidential candidate, John Kennedy brought unprecedented visibility to the issue of education. His religion was responsible for much of this attention. In a March 3, 1959, interview with *Look* magazine, Senator Kennedy asserted, "There can be no question of federal funds being used for support of parochial or private schools. It's unconstitutional under the First Amendment as interpreted by the Supreme Court."¹ The only possible exception to his position involved such "fringe matters as buses, lunches, and other services" where the issue was primarily social and economic, not religious. In the case of these *auxiliary* services, he suggested each problem should be judged on its merits within the interpretation of the Supreme Court.

Kennedy had hoped to ignore the *religious issue* during the primaries. However, continued skepticism threatened the credibility of the Kennedy arguments. More troublesome for him was opposition from the clergy itself. While getting him elected "seemed a test of religious toleration, others within the Church felt that a Catholic in the presidency could do less to help their interest than would a Protestant."² Also, many prelates, among them Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York and James Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles, were simply too conservative to accept Kennedy. This

¹"Democratic Forecast: A Catholic in 1960" *Look* XXIII (March 3, 1959), p. 17.

²Herbert Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Penguin Books, 1984), p. 38.

prompted Kennedy's celebrated comment: "Now I understand why Henry VIII set up his own church."³

Even Kennedy's victory in Wisconsin did not reduce his anxieties about the religious issue. The voting had been along Catholic-Protestant, as well as urban-rural, lines. Kennedy's candidacy had, indeed, provoked a flare-up of religious controversy in Midwestern America. This made the West Virginia primary crucial. It did so as Catholics accounted for just three percent of the population. Religion was important in West Virginia. Fundamentalism had strong roots among the people of a state impoverished by the decline of the coal industry. Kennedy's 61 percent of the popular vote and sweep of 48 of West Virginia's 55 counties convinced Hubert Humphrey to withdraw as an active challenger. It also became the best evidence that Catholicism would not necessarily be fatal to Kennedy's chances for the nomination.

Kennedy was able to counter the fear about religion through major speeches and television appearances. This aspect of the campaign was highlighted by his appearance on the eve of his primary victory. Very effectively, he declared, "When any man stands on the steps of the capitol and takes the oath of office as President, he is swearing to support the separation of church and state."⁴

The most forceful campaign statement on the religious issue came on September 12, 1960, at the Houston Ministerial Association. Speaking before a group of somewhat hostile and skeptical Protestant clergy, Kennedy reaffirmed his belief in a constitutional presidency, closing with a pledge to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution."⁵

³Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (Harper and Row, 1965), p. 148.

⁴Theodore White, *The Making of the President, 1960* (Atheneum, 1961), p. 107.

⁵Parmet, p. 46.

In his ten and a half minute address, Kennedy also stated his opposition to aid for parochial schools. He declared his belief in an America where the "separation of church and state is absolute . . . where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference."⁶ In response to a reporter's question later in the campaign, he completely wrote off aid to non-public schools by saying, "The principle of church-state separation precludes aid to parochial schools, and private schools enjoy the abundant resources of private enterprises."⁷

Kennedy's strong support of federal aid to public education would prove difficult in transcending the religious controversy. When Kennedy announced his candidacy at a press conference on January 2, 1960, he listed six main issues; the rebuilding of American science and education were listed third, behind the arms race and order in the emerging nations.⁸

The 1960 Democratic party platform plank on education provided for "generous federal financial support" consisting of "federal grants to states for educational purposes . . . including classroom construction and teachers' salaries."⁹ The platform also mandated a "program of loans and scholarship grants" and "aid for the construction of

⁶*The Speeches of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Campaign of 1960*, Report of the Commerce Committee, U.S. Senate 87th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 208.

⁷*New York Herald Tribune*, September 25, 1960.

⁸*New York Times*, January 3, 1960.

⁹Kirk H. Proter and Donald Bruce, eds. *National Party Platforms 1840-1968* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 590.

academic facilities as well as dormitories at colleges and universities."¹⁰ James Sundquist, a member of the 1960 Democratic National Platform Committee, stated:

Kennedy took the platform more seriously than most other members of the party; he did feel that he was running on that platform . . . [and] while it promised too much, it promised very little that President Kennedy did not try to deliver on.¹¹

Kennedy and Nixon were nominated by their respective party conventions in July, 1960. Their campaigns were largely dominated by Cold War posturing. However, on domestic issues, Kennedy raised the education issue often. In a September speech in Oregon, Kennedy stated that education was "the issue of this campaign." He called education legislation "the most important subject that we have," linking it to "a strong and democratic society."¹²

In an October, 1960, *Scholastic Teacher* questionnaire, Kennedy advocated the expenditure of federal funds for classroom construction and teachers's salaries. These funds would be allocated to the states based on each state's student population. He opposed the withholding of federal education funds from segregated schools. He also supported the establishment of a federal college scholarship program.¹³

In a special article for the *National Education Association Journal* entitled "Kennedy Says," he declared the United States faced "a crisis in education." Employing Cold War

¹⁰Ibid, p. 590.

¹¹Transcript, "James Sundquist Oral History Interview," September 13, 1965, JFKL, p. 9.

¹²"The Speeches, Remarks, Press Conferences, and Statements of Senator John F. Kennedy, August 1 through November 7, 1960," *Senate Report* 994, 1961, p. 147.

¹³"Nixon vs. Kennedy: Federal Aid to Education," *Scholastic Teacher* Supplement, *Senior Scholastic* 77 (October 19, 1960), pp. 1T-3T.

rhetoric, he explained the "issue is one of national survival, with civilization a race between education and catastrophe."¹⁴ In the same issue, under the title "Nixon Says," Nixon argued "federal education, if applied in the wrong way [would] impose a barrier in the form of rigid central controls over . . . what is taught."¹⁵ He criticized Democratic fiscal policy by stating, "The criteria . . . is not simply the amount of money we spend; it is how we spend it and toward what goal."¹⁶

Throughout the campaign, Kennedy also criticized Nixon for casting the tie-breaking vote which defeated the Democratic bill for increasing teachers' salaries. In an October speech in Minnesota, Kennedy accused Nixon of promising "us better schools and salaries for our teachers . . . but this year. . . . Mr. Nixon cast the deciding vote . . . against [the] Federal aid."¹⁷ In a speech at Ann Arbor, Michigan, Kennedy criticized Nixon for making Federal aid to education a "false issue." Kennedy argued, "Federal aid to education is nothing new . . . the U.S. Office of Education is already spending hundreds of millions to aid local education . . . and the Federal Government has not sought to impose any unreasonable demands."¹⁸

Late in the campaign, on a national telethon, Nixon was asked about his tie-breaking vote. He explained it as "a key vote . . . showing the difference in philosophy"

¹⁴"Kennedy Says," *National Education Association Journal* (October 1960), p. 10.

¹⁵"Nixon Says," *National Education Association Journal* (October 1960), p. 11.

¹⁶*Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁷"The Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy," *Senate Report* 994, 1961, p. 427.

¹⁸"The Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy," *Senate Report* 994, 1961, p. 1126.

between Kennedy and himself.¹⁹ Nixon stated while he felt strongly about teachers' salaries, having "the Federal Government subsidizing our teachers . . . is inviting the Federal Government to control what teachers teach." Nixon felt this must not happen "because the essence of freedom is education . . . and the moment you have the Federal Government controlling centrally what is taught . . . you are on the road to the loss of freedom."²⁰

Throughout the campaign, Nixon criticized Kennedy's education proposals as "a great big Government program." Nixon charged Kennedy with not giving the people a choice. It was not "the American way [to allow] the people in Washington . . . to set up huge programs in education, [to] . . . take care of the people." Nixon told a crowd of supporters, "It sounds good . . . [but] it won't work."²¹

The Kennedy forces had addressed Republican objections in a September 19, 1960, briefing paper. Describing the teacher as "the heart of the educative process," the paper urged "dramatically higher salaries" as the "real key to getting and keeping quality teachers."²² The increase would not be possible without "substantial federal assistance." Stressing "freedom of choice," candidate Kennedy would give local school systems "the freedom to make their decisions about how much money would go for teachers' salaries . . . and how much for construction of new classrooms."²³ In a campaign speech in Los

¹⁹"The Speeches of Vice President Richard M. Nixon," *Senate Report* 994, 1961, p. 1099.

²⁰*Ibid*, p. 1100.

²¹*Ibid*, p. 824.

²²"Salaries (Education)," Democratic National Committee, Box 195, Education folder (September 1, 1960 - September 2, 1960), JFKL.

²³*Ibid*.

Angeles, Kennedy reiterated "our commitment to complete local control of our school systems." Kennedy argued, "All Democratic bills . . . provide that the money shall be given to the states for distribution . . . yet the Republicans have opposed virtually every Democratic effort."²⁴

On September 25, the eve of the first "debate," Nixon released his study paper on education. It revealed a comprehensive program of federal aid, although it did not contain any dollar amounts. For elementary and secondary education, he proposed a program of debt-servicing and matching grants that would relieve state and local governments of construction costs. This would, "first in importance," release their funds "for urgent increases in teachers' pay . . . and we will do it without menacing the . . . freedom of our schools by inhibiting Federal control."²⁵ For higher education, Nixon called for a "greatly expanded" program of matching grants for the construction of classrooms, laboratories, and libraries. He also supported tuition tax credits for higher education.

During the remainder of the campaign, Kennedy criticized Nixon's study paper on education. In an October speech in Illinois, Kennedy declared Nixon's "campaign position paper . . . supports Federal grants to school districts burdened by Federal employees or installations--but as a Senator he voted to cut the heart out of these funds." Kennedy charged Nixon with having "never said a word" when the bill for college classrooms and dormitories was "twice passed by the Democrats and twice vetoed by the Republicans." Kennedy also stated when the battle for "matching grants to private

²⁴"The Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy, Presidential Campaign of 1960," *Senate Report* 994, December 1961, p. 1234.

²⁵"The Speeches of Vice-President Richard M. Nixon," *Senate Report* 994, 1961, p. 283.

colleges and universities was being waged, [Nixon] termed such a program as undesirable."²⁶

Nixon's education program appeared to have softened the edge of Kennedy's attack, but Kennedy kept pressing his appeal for federal aid for construction and teachers' salaries. This helped to secure an informal endorsement from the National Education Association. Their literature during the fall of 1960 made it clear the "Democratic presidential candidate's stand on federal aid was in agreement with NEA policy, while the Republican's was not."²⁷

The National Education Association was born in 1857 as a Congressionally chartered study group of college officials, school superintendents, and teachers. NEA membership consisted of primarily conservative, rural, middle-class white Protestants from the South and West.²⁸ In the nineteenth century, the association adopted a cautious stance, urging a greater federal responsibility in education but warning against federal control.

During the early twentieth century, the NEA grew from a study group to a professional organization which represented teachers in employment issues. Membership swelled in the wake of its nationwide survey of teachers' salaries in 1905 and a subsequent successful campaign for teacher tenure, retirement, and salary

²⁶The Speeches of John F. Kennedy, p. 742.

²⁷Frank J. Munger and Richard Fenno, *National Politics and Federal Aid to Education*, Syracuse University Press, 1962, p. 183.

²⁸Gilbert Elliot Smith, "The Limits of Reform: Politics and Federal Aid to Education 1937-1950," (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1975), p. 16.

improvement laws.²⁹ In 1920, the NEA inaugurated its Congressional lobbying unit, the Legislative Commission.

The New Deal period featured the acceleration of two significant developments within the NEA: the increased sophistication of its lobbying and public relations techniques, and the growing domination of the organization by school superintendents. The *NEA Journal* published studies conducted by the organization's Research Commission which bolstered the argument for federal aid. Gilbert E. Smith, the leading student of federal aid to education during this era, describes the NEA as finding itself "in the awkward position of being an organization with Republican sympathies needing Democratic support to get a liberal administration to agree to a rather moderate legislative proposal."³⁰

By the end of World War II, the NEA's position on federal aid had evolved to reflect changing realities. The successes and popularity of the New Deal experiment in large-scale federal involvement in social welfare matters helped diminish NEA apprehension of the hazards of federal control. Wartime dislocations and the postwar "baby boom" focused widespread attention on classroom and teacher shortages.

Throughout the Truman Administration, the NEA worked with unprecedented visibility and resources to secure federal aid to wealthy and poor states alike. Truman's secretary, William D. Hassett, estimated that an NEA federal aid letter-writing campaign had spawned four thousand communications to the President by January of 1949.³¹

²⁹Henry Citron, "The Study of the Arguments of Interest Groups Which Opposed Federal Aid to Education from 1949-1965," (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1977), p. 47.

³⁰Smith, p. 379.

³¹Muncie, p. 105.

By 1950, the support of prominent Republican Robert Taft, who had attacked federal aid in a 1941 address to the NEA, to the federal aid cause marked a major triumph for the organization. "When Taft changed his opinion about federal aid to education," writes former NEA official William Carr, "the issue could no longer be discussed as though it were solely a matter of political partisanship."³²

The euphoria created within the NEA by the Taft decision produced a new flexibility in the association's church-state stand, as the NEA wanted nothing to jeopardize its opportunity for federal aid. The Taft-Thomas-Hill proposal of 1947, S.246, established a minimum annual expenditure of forty dollars for each student and left the allocation of these federal funds to the states. The states could, therefore, distribute some of the funds to nonpublic schools. The NEA muted its opposition to such assistance, and the bill passed the Senate.

But North Carolina Representative Graham Barden's transformation of S.246 into his own public school-only bill in the House Education Subcommittee put the NEA's new flexibility to the test. While not relinquishing its support of S.246, the NEA nonetheless indicated it would back the Barden substitute. The NEA's retreat from S.246 became official when, at its 1947 convention, it voted down a resolution calling for the support of "federal aid for transportation and services made available for public and nonpublic schools."³³

NEA policy during the Eisenhower era consisted of two major features: a dislike for the Administration's piecemeal approach to federal aid, yet pragmatic approval of the

³²William G. Carr, *The Continuing Education of William Carr: An Autobiography*, (Washington: National Education Association, 1978), p. 300.

³³McAndrews, p. 73.

legislative strategy. The NEA leadership repeatedly chided Eisenhower for failure to intervene in the crucial House votes on federal aid to legislation.

Despite its misgivings about the tenacity of Eisenhower's commitment to education, the NEA exhibited unusual patience throughout much of his presidency. The NEA, an organization overwhelmingly composed of teachers, sacrificed its previous call for aid to teachers' salaries on the political bargaining table. The NEA "tried to make a virtue of necessity," in Carr's words, in backing the unsuccessful Kelly construction bill of 1956.³⁴ In the 1957 Congressional session, the NEA supported construction-only legislation, which again died in the House. Ultimately, the NEA found refuge from the troublesome questions of teachers' salaries, permanent support, race, and religion in the construction-only legislation which characterized much of the decade.³⁵

Public attention became directed to the so-called "great debates," which created a new precedent for presidential politics. While most of the debates focused on international issues, the first two did address education. In the first encounter, Kennedy blamed Congress' failure to pass the educational legislation on President Eisenhower and the Republican members of the House Rules Committee. Kennedy stated, "It's extremely difficult . . . to pass any bill when the President is opposed." It was also "the Rules

³⁴Ibid, p. 75.

³⁵Historians of the 1960 campaign place less emphasis on federal aid to public education as an issue than the religious controversy or foreign affairs. The standard authority on the campaign is Theodore H. White's "The Making of the President 1960." White is stronger on personality and mood than he is on the issues. He also misses the education issue almost entirely. The two "Kennedy-insider" biographies by Theodore Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger focus primarily on Kennedy's efforts to overcome the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy and the House Rules Committee. In "The Uncertain Triumph: Federal Education Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Years," Hugh Davis Graham provides a skillful analysis of the campaign and the debates. In the most recent appraisal of the Kennedy presidency, "Promises Kept," Irving Bernstein views the major issue as religion in the 1960 campaign.

Committee . . . [who] voted against sending the aid-to-education bill to the floor of the House or Senate."³⁶ Nixon challenged Senator Kennedy's description of the Rules Committee vote by noting:

. . . there are eight Democrats on that committee and four Republicans. . . . It is very difficult to blame the four Republicans for the eight Democrats not getting something through that particular committee.³⁷

In the second debate, Kennedy promised "moral leadership" in the struggle for "equality of education in all sections of the United States."³⁸ Nixon appearing more aggressive than in the first debate, criticized Kennedy's call "for high hopes" rather than "executive leadership. . . . I believe it's essential that the President . . . not only set the tone, but he also must lead."³⁹ This was in contrast to what he characterized as Eisenhower's silence on the *Brown v. Board of Education* verdict. Whereas the first two debates addressed education, the third mentioned it only in passing, while the fourth was devoted entirely to foreign policy. Overall, domestic issues centered on the performance of the economy and to a lesser degree on civil rights, on which both candidates rather carefully hedged.

The debates unquestionably stimulated campaign interest but the role of education played a very small part. Most of the debates featured both candidates confronting each other over international issues. Much of the time, the candidates were,

³⁶The Joint Appearances of Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard M. Nixon, Presidential Campaign, Senate Report, 994, pt. III, December 11, 1961, p. 86.

³⁷Ibid, p. 87.

³⁸Ibid, p. 151.

³⁹Ibid, p. 152.

in the words of Samuel Johnson, "arguing for victory." They sought to score points rather than clarify them. As one analyst of the debates has noted:

The reporters were a problem as they hopped from subject to subject, forcing the candidates into positions where they were not so much debating with one another as competing with one another to give effective answers to the questions.⁴⁰

It also gave to reporters the power, by the questions asked, to shape in some measure the crucial election issues.

In his account of the 1960 campaign, Theodore White blamed television's tendency to demand constant action for the disappointing treatment of issues during the debates.

All TV and radio discussion programs are compelled to snap question and answer back and forth as if the contestants were adversaries in an intellectual tennis match. . . . The most thoughtful and responsive answers to any difficult question came after a long pause, and that the longer the pause the more illuminating the thought that follows it, nonetheless the electronic media cannot bear to suffer a pause of more than five seconds; a pause of thirty seconds of dead time on the air seems interminable. Thus, snapping their two-and-a-half-minute answers back and forth, both candidates could only react for the cameras.⁴¹

In the debates as well as the campaign, it would be the religious issue which would be most powerful in getting out the vote. Though many issues were raised by both candidates, none proved strong enough to break through the wall of religious feeling. This was, as one observer noted, "the fate of the televised debates."⁴² They did

⁴⁰Bernard Rubin, *Political Television* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1967), p. 52.

⁴¹White, p. 331.

⁴²Samuel Lubell, "Personalities vs. Issues," in Sidney Kraus (ed.), *The Great Debates* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 161.

result in a sharp increase in popularity for Kennedy, but any advantage was muted by anti-Catholic opposition.

Senator Kennedy had declared himself an ardent supporter of federal aid to public education and placed it high on his list of domestic priorities. Vice-President Nixon had introduced a bold education plan of his own during the campaign. But the issue of federal aid to public education was overshadowed by the religious issue and the discussion of foreign affairs. In the most recent appraisal of the Kennedy presidency, Irving Bernstein suggests, "in 1960, excepting party loyalty, religion was the most important issue to voters."⁴³

NEA leaders had been concerned whether the Catholic senator, if elected, would resist the pressure of the Church hierarchy when faced with a decision on federal school legislation. In private and public statements, he assured NEA leaders that he considered federal school support an education question. He said that if elected, he would not only support such legislation, but would give leadership to the effort. As Frank Munger and Richard Fenno have emphasized in their 1962 study of the federal aid fight, the NEA did not express "an open endorsement of either candidate." However, NEA literature "circulated during the fall of 1960 made it clear that the Democratic presidential candidates stand on federal aid was in agreement with NEA policy while the Republican candidate's was not."⁴⁴ Even so, the NEA's de facto endorsement of Kennedy was not strong enough to increase his narrow margin of victory.

⁴³Irving Bernstein, *Promises Kept: JFK's New Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 37.

⁴⁴Munger and Fenno, p. 183. The NEA avoided formal presidential endorsements until its 1976 endorsement of Jimmy Carter.

Toward the campaign's close, on November 2, 1960, Kennedy pledged in a speech in Los Angeles that, "in 1961, a Democratic Congress--under the leadership of a Democratic President--will enact a bill to raise teachers' salaries as well as fund school construction."⁴⁵ With his winning plurality of only 112,803 popular votes out of 68,329,895 votes cast, the responsibility of translating promises into programs might prove difficult to "move America forward."

⁴⁵"The Speeches of Senator John F. Kennedy," *Senate Report* 994, pt. I, December 11, 1961, p. 1235.

CHAPTER III

LAUNCHING THE NEW FRONTIER

Early in 1960, in a speech at the National Press Club, John Kennedy put forward his conception of the Presidency. Kennedy asserted that a President "must be above all a Chief Executive in every sense of the word . . . , a Chief Executive who is the vital center of the action in our whole scheme of government."¹ He was determined to be a strong president. *Action* would represent the early days of the Kennedy Administration. Following what he considered the status quo approach of the Eisenhower Administration, Kennedy prescribed a greater role for his office, the Federal government, and the American people.

Kennedy's Presidential model was in many ways the product of Columbia University professor Richard Neustadt. In his influential *Presidential Power* (1960), he argued that the officeholder is potentially bigger than the office. A President's ability to reach this potential depends upon the manner in which he exploits what Neustadt called his "effective influence." These three sources of influence are: (a) "the bargaining advantages . . . with which he persuades other men that what he wants of them is what their own responsibilities require them to do"; (b) "the expectations of those other men regarding his ability and will to use the advantages they think he has"; and (c) "those men's estimates of how his public views him and how their public may view them if they

¹Lewis J. Paper, *The Promise and the Performance: The Leadership of JFK* (New York, Crown, Inc., 1976), p. 67.

do what he wants."² Kennedy adopted both the philosophy and philosopher as Neustadt became a Special Assistant to the President.

In the area of federal aid to education, Kennedy could choose from three presidential approaches. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had dedicated himself to a policy of experimentation as governor of New York, but realized the states were not equipped to adequately address the economic emergency of the depression. With his election, the federal government assumed a greater role in education under the New Deal of the 1930s.

The Public Works Administration, created in 1933, issued loans and grants for school and college construction. The Works Projects (later "Progress") Administration, launched in 1935, supported various educational programs. Between July 1935 and March 1938, approximately \$93 million poured into WPA projects. During this same period, an average of forty-three thousand teachers worked under the program, with maximum employment reaching sixty thousand in March 1936.³

The Civilian Conservation Corps (1933) and the National Youth Association (1935) offered vocational training as well as employment for people of high school and college age. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, as of February 1934, was disbursing \$48 million to employ unemployed teachers and \$75 million to pay overdue salaries of teachers. The Social Security Act of 1939 earmarked federal funds for vocational education for physically disabled children.

²Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Policy of Leadership*, (New York: Wiley, 1968), p. 179.

³Muncie, p. 27.

The position of President Roosevelt on the issue of Federal aid to education was extremely important. In a letter written in 1935 to Mr. S. L. Smith of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, Roosevelt set forth his opinion concerning the possibility of direct federal aid.⁴ Mr. Smith had written to the President concerning the poor financial conditions existing in many school systems in the nation. He suggested setting up a Secretary of Education and Relief, and implied federal aid would be helpful. The President replied that the only type of "encouragement" the federal government could offer was in the form of loans at a low rate of interest. He made no mention of any possibility of direct federal financial aid.⁵

Later that same year, Roosevelt also made his views known concerning the problem of aid to parochial schools. He believed all financial grants to these schools were unconstitutional, since "the historic policy of this country which separates church and state is felt to be violated whenever such grants are made."⁶

Franklin Roosevelt had taken only one hundred days to revolutionize the federal role in social welfare, but it would take him five years to appoint a committee to study federal aid to education. By mid-1939, many groups and individuals were pressuring the President for direct financial aid. Taking the lead was the National Education Association. Amy H. Hinricks, President of the NEA, presented its position in a letter to Roosevelt. She said the NEA was "keenly disappointed" by the failure of the federal government to enact a program of "general education," and asked for a "message of reassurance" to the supporters of education. Roosevelt yielded somewhat to this pressure. In a press

⁴Muncie, p. 29.

⁵Ibid, p. 29.

⁶Ibid, p. 30.

conference on December 22, 1939, he indicated he was in favor of federal aid for states such as Georgia and Mississippi because "they were unable to bear the burden alone."⁷ But as Gilbert E. Smith suggests, "Roosevelt's efforts to hold together a weakened coalition made it virtually impossible for him to support legislation that included such divisive issues as race, religion, and federal control."⁸

Programs initiated by the New Deal do furnish proof of successful aid to education. The federal government provided the aid, while the states retained control of their systems. Non-public schools participated in the program, indicating that problem might also be resolved. However, as John Muncie points out, "Congress passed this legislation during a time of grave national emergency," and federal aid to education was "merely an incidental portion of the entire plan of recovery."⁹

Harry Truman established himself as the strongest ally of federal aid to education yet to inhabit the White House. In his budget message to Congress January 3, 1947, Truman proclaimed:

I have long been on record for basic legislation under which the Federal Government will supplement the resources of the States to assist them to equalize educational opportunities and achieve satisfactory educational standards.¹⁰

A torrent of no less than twenty education bills followed the President's message.

⁷Ibid, p. 32.

⁸Smith, p. 117.

⁹Muncie, p. 28.

¹⁰Harry S. Truman, "Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1948," January 10, 1947, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Vol. 1947 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 76.

As one historian of the struggle over the federal government and education, Robert Bendiner, has suggested, two critical developments tempered the optimism of Truman's statement. The first was the enactment of the LaFollette-Monroney Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, designed to streamline a growing congressional committee system, which consolidated the House Labor and Education Committees into a single entity. The result, Bendiner notes, was that labor legislation assumed primacy over federal aid within the new group.¹¹ The second was the Republican victory in the 1946 Congressional elections. The Republican repudiation of Truman at the polls greatly enhanced the chances that Congress would again fail to enact federal aid.¹²

With the reelection of the Democratic President and the return of a Democratic Congress after a two year period, federal aid supporters resumed their fight. On March 18, 1949, the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare unanimously reported what Bendiner labels

a skillful compromise, . . . providing some grants, authorizing expenditures for teachers' salaries and current operative costs, but not for construction; and allowing states that already permitted public money to be spent on nonpublic schools for transportation and textbooks to use their Federal grants for the same purpose.¹³

The bill passed the Senate 58-15.

In the House, Education Subcommittee Chairman Graham Barden of North Carolina revised the bill to exclude aid to nonpublic schools and preclude federal control by eliminating periodic state reports to the federal government. Education and Labor

¹¹Bendiner, p. 82.

¹²Ibid, p. 83.

¹³Ibid, p. 90.

Committee Chairman John Lesinski of Michigan restored the provisions of the Senate measure, but the damage inflicted by Barden remained. A 13-12 Committee vote "doused the federal aid flame yet again."¹⁴

Harry Truman, the first president under whom Kennedy served in the Congress, fought for a New Deal in education. Congress was generally more interested in fighting yesterday's battles over existing New Deal legislation. After a Republican majority attempted to undo the New Deal, a Democratic majority tried to restore it. The fury unleashed within the House Education and Labor Committee during the Truman years left Congress gun-shy toward federal aid to education. In a political climate dominated by charges of corruption, the communist threat at home, and the outbreak of the Korean War, the House of Representatives hid behind the religious issue, and Truman and the Senate lost their enthusiasm for federal aid.

President Eisenhower indicated quite early in his administration that he recognized the need for aid, but he would not act until the problem and possible solutions were completely analyzed. He believed the situation called for "study and action."¹⁵ In January of 1954, Eisenhower gave form to the course of action his administration would pursue. His Second Annual message cited public education as a state and local responsibility.¹⁶ However, the federal government would stand ready to assist states which could not provide sufficient school buildings.

¹⁴Citron, p. 104.

¹⁵Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," February 2, 1953, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, vol. 1953 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), p. 32.

¹⁶Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 7, 1954, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, vol. 1954, p. 21.

Eisenhower often declared his support for federal aid for school construction, but never actively participated in the struggle. This was a new approach, since previous attempts to aid the schools did not limit the use of funds to construction, but instead covered a broad area of educational costs, including teachers' salaries.

In February of 1955, Eisenhower proposed a three-year, \$73 million school construction program to be financed by local school bonds, federal backing for state school construction bonds, and federal matching grants.¹⁷ Democratic Senators H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey and Lister Hill of Alabama, and Representative Augustine Kelley of Pennsylvania produced a similar bill for \$600 million a year for six years.¹⁸ For the first time since World War II, the House debated a school aid proposal, the so-called "Kelley bill." During the course of the lively debate, Representative Adam Clayton Powell of New York introduced an anti-segregation amendment. It was approved, stricken, and then accepted again. But while the amendment won, the bill lost.

The struggle for federal aid to elementary and secondary education reached its peak in 1957 after a \$325 million, four-year school construction proposal very similar to the 1955 Eisenhower plan met with the approval of the House Democratic and Republican leadership.¹⁹ Although burdened by neither great expense nor an anti-segregation amendment, the bill died before it came to a vote. Eisenhower, criticized by many for failing to intercede in the battle to ensure the bill's passage, replied that "he was fed up with compromising on education bills and that only his 1955 proposal had his

¹⁷Citron, p. 118.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 120.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 146.

"thorough" approval.²⁰ He explained his low profile on the education debate, stating, "You don't influence Congress . . . by threats, by anything except . . . the soundness and logic of your views."²¹ His evasion on federal aid can be in part attributed to his increasing apprehension over the country's economy. This came at a time when the cost of living had risen four percent within the previous year and Secretary of the Treasury George Humphry was forecasting a depression.²²

Kennedy had chosen the Truman approach with his fiercely partisan treatment of federal aid in the campaign. This had included his inaccurate depiction of Richard Nixon as an enemy of a federal role in education.

Shortly after his nomination, candidate Kennedy had appointed with "appropriate publicity a series of advisory committees whose reports were to be delivered during the transition period."²³ On November 8, president-elect Kennedy appointed Theodore Sorensen special counsel to the president and charged him to recruit "a series of unannounced task forces from the ranks of the professions, foundations, and university faculties."²⁴ The number of those participating "was close to one hundred men, who received neither compensation nor expense money . . . although public release of the reports . . . brought considerable public attention to at least the task force chairman."²⁵

²⁰Price, p. 12.

²¹Munger and Fenno, p. 91.

²²William A. McCormack, "The Struggle to Secure Federal Aid for Education, 1959-1960" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1961), p. 117.

²³Sorensen, p. 265.

²⁴Ibid, p. 267.

²⁵Graham, p. 10.

The task force operation also proved to be an excellent recruiting device. Kennedy saw the various task forces as a way to promote new projects. He viewed them as "part of the theater of government."²⁶ The task forces "carried a sense of the importance of getting things done"²⁷ unlike *committees* which connoted bureaucratic inertia.

THE HOVDE TASK FORCE ON EDUCATION

Kennedy named Frederick Hovde, president of Purdue University, to chair the six man task force to study education. The other members were Alvin Eurich, a vice president of the Ford Foundation; Francis Keppel, dean of the Harvard School of Education; John Gardner, president of the Carnegie Corporation; Russell Thackery, executive secretary of the American Land Grant Colleges Association; and Benjamin Willis, superintendent of public schools in Chicago, president-elect of the American Association of School Administrators, and chairman of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association. It was a "distinguished body," dominated by representatives of higher education. The interests of elementary and secondary education were represented only by Willis, but it was also one that contained "no representatives of the conservative, Southern, Democratic, Catholic church, or NAACP positions" on the volatile question of federal aid to schools.²⁸

²⁶Thomas E. Cronin and Sanford D. Greenberg, *The Presidential Advisory System* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. XVI.

²⁷Louis Koenig, "Administrative Chief," in Aida DiPace Donald (ed.), *John F. Kennedy and the New Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. 26.

²⁸Hugh Douglas Price, "Race, Religion, and the Rules Committee," in Alan Westin (ed.), *The Uses of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), p. 21.

Within weeks of receiving its orders, the task force had identified "legislative and administrative proposals of the highest priority," after sifting through "more than sixty legislative proposals put forward" in the past several years.²⁹

This group of scholars reported their findings to the President in early January, 1961. They indicated that the nation's schools were in dire need of financial assistance if they were to perform their necessary functions in a democratic society. The task force recommended:

1. The transfer of thirty dollars per annum per pupil based on average daily attendance in public schools, from the federal government to the states, for construction, teachers's salaries, or "other purposes related to the improvement of education"--the annual cost would be \$1.2 billion.

2. The assignment of twenty federal dollars per student in average daily attendance in public schools with "provision to assure maintenance of state and local effort and funds should be [made] available for construction, salaries, or other purposes related to the improvement of education in the public schools as the states may determine." About seven million children from one-fourth of the states would benefit from this plan. The annual costs would be \$140 million.

3. The expenditure of twenty dollars per child in average daily attendance in the public schools of cities of over 300,000 population, which "are facing unique and grave educational problems." A formula based on population density, nature of housing, and percentage of high school graduates would determine the eligibility for such

²⁹Letter, Frederick Hovde to Sorensen, January 2, 1961, Pre-Presidential Papers, Box 1071, Transition Files, Education Task Force Report, JFKL.

assistance. It was estimated that the education of six million children could be improved at a cost of \$120 million.

4. The establishment of a President's Advisory Commission on Education.³⁰

The most startling aspect of the Hovde recommendations was the price tag. It totalled more than \$9,390,000,000 in grants and loans over the next four-and-one-half years. Out of this, \$5,840,000,000 would go to public schools in the form of grants to the states (for construction, salaries, or other appropriate educational expenditures).³¹ This amounted to an annual total of \$2,310,000,000, which far exceeded the most generous Senate bill that had failed the previous year. In that Senate bill of 1960, the Democrats had enjoyed an even larger majority in Congress. Clearly, the Hovde report called for a massive and permanent federal role in education, with elementary and secondary aid reserved for the public schools only.

Kennedy's *private judgment* of the task reports ranged from "helpful" to "terrific."³² The President's reaction to the Hovde report was mixed. Hovde told the press that "anything less . . . would not be significant for a program of uplifting education," while Kennedy cautiously said there was "great value" in the report. He added, "I don't know whether we have the resources immediately to take on the whole program."³³ Privately, according to Sorensen, Kennedy was "quite annoyed, quite upset" because he thought it was a "very unrealistic program." He also "correctly felt the press would feel that this

³⁰Sidney Tiedt, *The Role of the Federal Government in Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 166-68, and Report of the Task Force Committee on Education, undated, Pre-Presidential Papers, Box 1071, Transition Files, Education, JFKL.

³¹Graham, p. 12.

³²Sorensen, p. 237.

³³*New York Times*, January 7, 1961.

was the program he was going to put into effect."³⁴ The conservative press attacked the recommendations, playing up "the enormous billion dollar cost" of the plan. Conservative critics quickly noted that many educators were increasingly inclined to equate quality with the amount of dollars spent. The President, as Assistant Secretary of HEW, Wilbur Cohen, remembered, "didn't like these big figures. He didn't want the idea getting over that he was a man who was just interested in spending a lot of money."³⁵ The "undue" emphasis given to the program's price tag "frustrated the President, who felt attention should properly have been focused on the merits of the Hovde proposals."³⁶

The most damaging reaction came three days before the inauguration when Cardinal Spellman criticized the Hovde task force recommendations at a major address in the Bronx. He demanded that some of the money go to the 11 percent of the nation's school children who attended parochial schools. The Cardinal believed the President's plan meant that Roman Catholics would be "taxed more than ever before for the education of their children," but they could not expect any return from their taxes. The Cardinal repeatedly announced his disbelief that Congress would accept the task force proposals, which would be depriving parochial school children of "freedom of mind and freedom of religion."³⁷ Whether the task force had been designed as a trial balloon or not, it indicated an ominous future for the President's aid-to-education legislation.

³⁴Graham, p. 13.

³⁵Transcript, "Wilbur Cohen Oral History Interview," November 11, 1964, JFKL, p. 27.

³⁶Janet C. Kerr, "From Truman to Johnson: Ad Hoc Policy Formulation in Higher Education," *Review of Higher Education* 8.1 (Fall 1984), p. 33.

³⁷"The Cardinal's Claim," *Time* LXXVII (January 27, 1961), p. 62.

THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS:
EXPANDING THE HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE

From its beginnings, the Kennedy Administration had pledged to "get the country moving again." In a mid-December 1960 meeting with Vice President Lyndon Johnson, the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn of Texas, and the Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield of Montana, Kennedy reached three important decisions regarding education. First, his federal aid to education program would be among five domestic issues receiving highest priority during the opening session of the 87th Congress. Second, he decided that any federal aid bill which he proposed would involve aid to impacted areas. Third, he approved Rayburn's intention to reform the House Rules Committee.³⁸ Most of his program would not even come to a vote until he had challenged and defeated the coalition that "ruled the House and frustrated the more liberal Senate through its control of the House Rules Committee."³⁹

The decision to include aid to impacted areas demonstrated the popularity of such assistance, even among opponents of federal aid legislation. Public Laws 815 and 874 authorized federal assistance in areas *impacted* by the installation of a naval or military base. Kennedy hoped to eventually phase out what he considered an antiquated program. However, he accepted the extension of the program as an enticement for Congressmen wavering on federal support.

The expansion of the conservative-dominated House Rules Committee became Kennedy's first major crisis and provided the first great legislative drama of his

³⁸Parmet, pp. 75-76.

³⁹Helen Fuller, *Year of Trial: Kennedy's Crucial Decisions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. 80.

presidency. It "threatened to cripple the new administration before it could really get under way."⁴⁰ A loss on such a key issue threatened the power and prestige of the new president, including his relations with Congress. The outcome also had important implications for the way in which the House would conduct its business during the 87th Congress. Kennedy realized this battle could not be postponed as it could in the Senate.

On March 19, 1910, the House of Representatives adopted an amendment to the House rules offered by Nebraska Representative George Norris. With this action, the House stripped Speaker Joseph Cannon of his authority to appoint the Committee on Rules. It also made the Committee an elective body on which the Speaker could not serve.

A conservative coalition began to operate in Congress during Franklin Roosevelt's second term. Southern Democrats became upset at the repeal of the two-thirds nominating rule which Roosevelt had pushed through the 1936 Democratic Convention. This had deprived them of veto power over Presidential candidates. Conservative Republicans in Congress expressed shock at Roosevelt's *court packing* proposal and the sit-down strikes of 1937.

In a combined effort to stop New Deal legislation, this conservative coalition took control of the House Rules Committee. They promptly changed it "from traffic cop to policy maker."⁴¹ Following the rule of "Boss Cannon," the Rules Committee simply directed the flow of bills from the committee to the floor. Under the coalition, the Committee held the immense power of deciding the merits of the thousands of bills

⁴⁰Jim F. Health, *Decade of Disillusionment: The Kennedy-Johnson Years* (Bloomington, ID: University Press, 1975), p. 63.

⁴¹Ibid, p. 80.

introduced in each session. No legislation could reach the floor without a *rule* and the Rules Committee granted few rules. Even when both the Senate and the House had passed a measure, the Committee still had the final word. Unless the two bodies had enacted identical bills, "it could prevent the House from entering a conference with the Senate to iron out the differences in the two versions."⁴² This unofficial "third house" had the power to veto a measure desired by the President and passed by the two Constitutional houses. Clearly, the House Rules Committee became a formidable obstacle to progressive legislation. (The Rules Committee was so powerful, Alaska and Hawaii had to wait five years before the Committee addressed their admission to the Union.)⁴³

The chairman of the House Rules Committee was Howard W. Smith, a Democrat from Virginia. He was one of the five anti-New Deal Democrats who formed the original coalition with Republican colleagues on the committee in 1937. A states rights advocate and fiscal conservative, Smith ardently opposed extension of the federal role in American life.

The question of what to do about the Rules Committee was largely up to Speaker Sam Rayburn. He had been elected to the House in 1912. For several years, liberal Democrats had urged him to do something about the situation. A respected veteran of almost half a century, "Mr. Sam" had come to value compromise highly, but Rayburn was also a Democrat, "with a deep sense of responsibility to cooperate with the President."⁴⁴

⁴²Tom Wicker, *JFK and LBJ: The Influence of Personality Upon Politics* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 36.

⁴³Robert Bendiner, *Obstacle Course on Capitol Hill* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 152-53.

⁴⁴Price, p. 14.

After the December meeting with the President, Rayburn assured him that he would win control of the Committee. Rayburn did not say "how this was to be done and Kennedy did not ask."⁴⁵

Shortly before the opening of the new Congress, Rayburn met with six Democratic Congressmen, including House Majority Leader John McCormack and Democratic Whip Carl Albert. They unanimously urged Rayburn to purge conservative Representative William Colmer of Mississippi, who had refused to support the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. Having received this unanimous opinion, Rayburn overrode it. He would add three new members to the Committee instead of removing one. Rayburn always thought it "better politics to give than to take away"⁴⁶ He was afraid of upsetting the seniority system as well. The Speaker was also conscious of Southern sensibilities, with many members loyal to the party, but terrified by the idea of a purge. In addition, it would be difficult to explain a vote to purge a white Southerner when they had not voted to purge the black Democratic Education and Labor Committee Chairman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. for his endorsement of Eisenhower in the 1956 election.

Rayburn began the new year by approaching "Judge" Smith with his plan--and his threat. Smith refused any compromise, leaving no doubt a peaceful solution was out of the question. The following week, Smith offered Rayburn a compromise: he would guarantee that Kennedy's five priority domestic items (including education) would survive the Rules Committee if the Speaker would abandon his plan. This was not good enough. Rayburn rejected it with some anger, saying, "The President may want forty bills."⁴⁷

⁴⁵Wicker, p. 61.

⁴⁶Fuller, p. 83.

⁴⁷Wicker, p. 64.

Clearly, Sam Rayburn and Howard Smith were the protagonists. They knew that "he who controls procedure often controls substance," and that was the nature of the fight.⁴⁸ But the meeting gave Rayburn an opportunity to pursue his strategy. He again offered the expansion of the Committee as an alternative to the purge.

On January 10th, Carl Vinson of Alabama, second in seniority in the House, held a caucus of Southern House Democrats. They discussed the alternatives offered by the Speaker. With "Judge" Smith among the dissenters, the majority voted to enlarge the Committee rather than risk a Colmer purge.

Rayburn hoped to convene the first binding caucus since 1949. This would have forced all Democrats to vote on the floor as two-thirds did in the caucus, but to obtain a promise from Smith to consider the Rules Committee expansion bill for an early vote, Rayburn agreed not to call a binding caucus or contest Colmer's reappointment to the Rules Committee.

On January 18th, the non-binding Democratic House Caucus approved the Rayburn resolution to expand the Rules Committee from twelve members (eight Democrats, four Republicans) to fifteen members (ten Democrats, five Republicans). Shortly after, the Republican House Conference denounced it. Rayburn's intention to press for the expansion of the Rules Committee would require not just a majority of the Democratic caucus, but a majority of the entire House membership, including Republicans. The key to victory or defeat would not come from the partisans on both sides of the aisle. Instead, the crucial votes would come from the center of conservative-to-moderate Democrats and moderate-to-liberal Republicans.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 35.

On January 24th, the Rules Committee reported out the Rayburn bill 6-2, with only the Democratic members present and voting. On January 25th, the day before the scheduled vote, Rayburn's informal survey revealed too few votes for his plan. He postponed the vote until January 31st, the day after the President's first State of the Union Message. It was hoped that Kennedy's eloquence and restraint would convince those who were undecided. The postponement was seen in the House as a sign of weakness on the part of the Kennedy administration. House Minority Leader Charles Halleck of Indiana replied that:

The majority leader has given us the reason for the postponement and I am not going to argue with that. . . . But I think it should be fairly well understood that there have been efforts at the Cabinet level to call members on our side in the last few hours. Perhaps other moves may be in contemplation—I do not know."⁴⁹

He also wryly added, "The New Frontier is having trouble with its first roundup."⁵⁰ That same evening, at his first press conference, President Kennedy announced his position on nationwide television. He declared that any rule changes in the House were an internal matter entirely under the control of the House members. He added that while he gave his news "as an interested citizen . . . the House should have an opportunity to vote themselves on the program which we will present."⁵¹ Congressional response was swift. Republican Representative Frank T. Bow of Ohio stated:

It is regrettable that Mr. Kennedy has added to the confusion, although he said he was speaking as a private citizen. . . . The President has injected himself into this controversy. . . . The responsibility as to what legislation

⁴⁹*Congressional Record*, January 25, 1961, p. 1224.

⁵⁰*New York Times*, January 26, 1961.

⁵¹*New York Times*, January 26, 1961.

will eventually be voted upon by the membership of the House of Representatives lies with the Democratic leadership--not with the Rules Committee.⁵²

A week of intense lobbying led by Congressional liaison Lawrence O'Brien followed the vote on the committee expansion resolution. O'Brien enlisted Andrew Biemiller, chief lobbyist of the AFL-CIO, and Rayburn employed Congressman Richard Bolling of Missouri. Their strategy was to hold "Southern defections to less than 60" and have "at least 16 Republican conversions."⁵³ Vice President Johnson, from Texas, and Commerce Secretary Luther Hodges, a North Carolinian, targeted Southern Congressmen. Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, from Arizona, pressured Western Republicans. On the morning before the vote, Kennedy telephoned three important House members.⁵⁴

The vote came on January 31st. The importance of this vote revealed itself when Speaker Rayburn made a rare address to his colleagues. He contended that Kennedy's "New Frontier" would not receive the trial it deserved without reform of the Rules Committee. The Speaker forcefully concluded, "I think the House should be allowed on great measures to work its will, and it cannot work its will if the Committee on Rules is so constituted as not to allow the House to pass on those things."⁵⁵ Next came Judge Smith's turn. In a "quiet, almost disinterested voice" he gave his personal assurance that the Kennedy program would be released. He described his reasons for opposing Rayburn's plan to *pack* the Committee on Rules and then proudly declared, "Nobody can

⁵²*Congressional Record*, January 26, 1961, p. 1345.

⁵³Fuller, p. 86.

⁵⁴Price, p. 17.

⁵⁵*Congressional Record*, January 31, 1961, p. 1508.

humiliate me except the people who have elected me to Congress sixteen consecutive times."⁵⁶ Then the long roll call began. The final vote was a narrow 217 to 212 vote, increasing the size of the Committee on Rules. Among the absentees was Republican ex-Speaker Joe Martin, who had been out of the country. Rayburn sorely needed Republican votes and could have used Martin's support, which he had been promised. Rayburn left the Chambers smiling, brushing past members and reporters who trailed behind offering congratulations. Asked how he felt, "Rayburn's eyes twinkled. I feel all right. That's as good as a man can feel. I always feel good when I win."⁵⁷

The Kennedy Administration had won its first skirmish in Congress, despite sixty-four Southern and border state Democrats voting against the resolution. But the administration had the solid support of Northern and Western Democrats, plus the crucial supporting votes of 22 Republicans.⁵⁸ The Kennedy victory had been costly, however. "With all of that going for us," the President observed, "with Rayburn's own reputation at stake, with all of the pressures and appeals a new President could make, we won by five votes."⁵⁹ The embittered atmosphere following the Rayburn-Smith exchange remained in the House chamber. Many House Democrats felt they had been under interrogation, making the issue virtually one of personal loyalty.

The day after the vote, Republican John J. Flynt of Georgia charged Rayburn with attempting to buy his support by promising Flynt a seat on the coveted Appropriations

⁵⁶Wicker, p. 59.

⁵⁷D. B. Hardeman and Donald C. Bacon, *Rayburn: A Biography* (Austin, TX: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), p. 465.

⁵⁸*Congressional Record*, January 31, 1961, pp. 1958-1590..

⁵⁹Sorensen, p. 382.

Committee if he voted *correctly*.⁶⁰ The widespread accusations of pressures and reprisals demonstrated the ferocity over the House Rules Committee vote. But Rayburn had, as Robert Caro describes, "an indefinable knack for sensing the mood of the House; he seemed to know, by some intuitive instinct for the legislative process, just how far it could be pushed."⁶¹

Caro describes how "few people, if they depended on the public prints for their information, knew much about him."⁶² Rayburn received little credit for his role in the passage of the Securities Act of 1933, the Stock Exchange Act of 1934, and the Holding Company during the early New Deal period. He has received little credit from history, "in part because he left almost no record of his deeds in writing." In fact, it is possible to read histories of the New Deal and "find hardly a reference to Sam Rayburn."⁶³ He was inconspicuous outside of the halls of power, and in part because he was shy, he avoided publicity. "Let the other fellow get the headlines," he said, "I'll take the laws."⁶⁴

Judge Smith, who had called the final vote "all baloney," took his defeat hard. He indicated that having received "a mandate to call up legislation, he would do so--with a vengeance."⁶⁵ Within three weeks of the vote to enlarge his committee, Smith flooded

⁶⁰"It is Still the House that Mr. Sam the Speaker Runs," *Newsweek* 57 (February 13, 1961), pp. 26-28.

⁶¹Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 319.

⁶²*Ibid*, p. 327.

⁶³*Ibid*, p. 327.

⁶⁴*Ibid*, p. 328.

⁶⁵Price, p. 20.

the House with hearings on bills that were either embarrassing to the administration or vigorously opposed by the Speaker.

More threatening to the Kennedy legislation campaign was the effect of the Rules fight on Republicans. Under the able leadership of Minority Leader Charles Halleck, the Republicans amassed a substantial vote against the Rayburn effort. His defense of the former Rules Committee surprised both the members of the House and Speaker Rayburn. The Kennedy forces sought to divide the conservative Democratic-Republican alliance. By doing so they could enact the Kennedy Domestic program, but the Rules Committee battle had aggravated a partisan environment "already poisoned by the narrowness of Kennedy's election and the conviction" that many Republicans felt "Kennedy had stolen the White House."⁶⁶

The Kennedy Administration had its victory, but coming only eleven days after Kennedy's moving inaugural address, it deprived the new President of the traditional honeymoon with the legislature. The administration had also held nothing in reserve and could not bring the same pressure to bear for every item on the President's list. Clearly, the White House had cause for concern about the future of the Kennedy legislative program. In an interview some time after the House Rules victory, Lawrence O'Brien ironically remarked, "I often wonder what would have happened if we had lost by one vote."⁶⁷

⁶⁶McAndrews, p. 151.

⁶⁷Fuller, p. 88.

CHAPTER IV

A NATION AT RISK: PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND THE EDUCATION BILL OF 1961

The 1960 election was one of the closest in American history. Kennedy ran behind many of the Democrats elected to the House and Senate. But the real test, "he remarked soon after his victory, was not his election but his administration."¹ Kennedy was aware of the difficulties facing his domestic program, but as in his campaign, he did not hesitate to promote his education proposal.

One historian of American education, Chester Finn, has suggested that "Presidents seldom think about education. . . . As seen from the White House, education is a low-level issue that commands no precedence on the ever-lengthening list of presidential concerns."² But Kennedy considered enactment of an education bill as the most important social welfare goal for 1961. According to his assistant and biographer, Theodore Sorensen, education was "the one domestic subject that mattered most to John Kennedy."³

Kennedy promised during the 1960 campaign that great deeds would follow. Shortly after the election, Kennedy began to work on his first educational message. His remarks would not only unveil his education program, but serve as one of his first

¹Sorensen, p. 400.

²Chester Finn, *Education and the Presidency* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1977), p. 103.

³Sorensen, p. 401.

domestic policy statements of the new administration. There were two domestic "special messages" to Congress which preceded his education message. The first was on economic recovery and the second covered health and hospital care. These "special messages" were not addresses delivered by Kennedy, but one in which clerks read his remarks to Congress.

Kennedy's address would come at a time when self-proclaimed *liberals* were skeptical of his attraction to the ideas of political scientist Richard Neustadt and other intellectuals. They were also concerned about his past alliances with McCarthyites and budget balancing. During the 1960 Democratic convention, a member of Americans for Democratic Action remarked, "It isn't what Kennedy believes that worries me. It's whether he believes anything."⁴ But Kennedy had always resisted the effort to "tag him with an ideological label" often saying, "I'm not a liberal at all. . . . I'm not comfortable with those people."⁵ As James MacGregor Burns wrote in a biography of John Kennedy that was published just before the 1960 campaign, Kennedy's *liberalism* was shaped in "fits and starts . . . with concrete problems." He remarked that "while some people have their liberalism 'made' . . . by their late 20's, . . . I didn't. . . . It was only later that I got into the stream of things."⁶ Kennedy's self-confidence "rested more on his estimate of his own abilities than on any identification with any philosophy."⁷

The question of Kennedy's religion also continued to pose a problem for the president, as it had during the campaign. He never believed the 1960 election had

⁴Parnet, pp. 36-37.

⁵Burns, pp. 134-135.

⁶Ibid, p. 155.

⁷McAndrews, p. 157.

removed religion as an issue. Cardinal Spellman's attack on the Hovde Task Force recommendations and several journals critical of the administration's approach to education confirmed the Presidents view. In *America*, the national Catholic weekly magazine, an editorial argued the "separation of Church and State is meant to preserve freedom and justice, not to serve as a pretext for taxing a constitutional right out of existence."⁸

Kennedy's education message would also make known his commitment to civil rights. His choice of a Southern running mate and his ability to maintain and build upon a position of racial toleration, allowed candidate Kennedy to pursue actively what Virginia segregationist Harry Byrd called a "both sides against the middle strategy."⁹

THE 1961 EDUCATION BILL--PERMANENT SUPPORT

Kennedy forwarded his first special message on education to Congress on February 20, 1961. In it, he made recommendations in each of the three areas covered by the Hovde Task Force, plus proposals in vocational education. But congressional attention focused on his proposals for aid to elementary and secondary schools. He proposed a three-year program of federal support for public school classroom construction and teachers' salaries. Based essentially on the bill which passed the Senate in 1960 (S.8), although beginning at a lower level, Kennedy's program would assure a minimum \$15 per annum for every pupil in average daily attendance with the

⁸"Freedom to Education," *America* 54 (January 28, 1961), p. 552.

⁹Carl Brauer, *John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 57.

total amount (\$666 million the first year, \$866 million over three years)¹⁰ distributed according to the equalization formula contained in the 1960 Senate bill. This formula would give Mississippi, the poorest state, \$29.67 per child, and New York and New Jersey, two of the wealthiest states, the minimal \$15 per child.¹¹ Kennedy's pledge of assistance for teachers' salaries as well as school building construction solidly aligned him with the position of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The day after the message, an NEA delegation arrived at the White House to assure the president of their support. Selma Borchard of the American Federation of Teachers called the Kennedy proposal "the most far-seeing program for education that has been urged by the White House since the Morrill Act."¹²

His message, which was read by clerks in both houses, also touched on the crucial issue of aid to parochial schools:

In accordance with the clear prohibition of the Constitution, no elementary or secondary school funds are allocated for constructing church schools or paying church school teachers' salaries; and thus nonpublic school children are

¹⁰John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Education," February 20, 1961, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Vol. 1961 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 108.

¹¹Wicker, p. 123. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act providing for grants of land to each "loyal" state for the establishment of colleges specializing in agricultural and mechanical arts. The Morrill Act was significant not only because of the large number of colleges it established, but also because it changed the type of aid previously made available to the states. The act marked a transition from general aid to grants in aid for specific types of education. This established a trend which continued down to 1965.

¹²Selma Borchard, "The AF of T Aid Program in Washington," *American Teacher* 45 (April 1961), p. 7.

rightfully not counted in determining the funds each state will receive for its public schools.¹³

This proclamation was applauded by many Protestants and separationists of all faiths, while discouraging those favoring aid to parochial schools. Monsignor William E. McManus, superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Chicago remarked that aid to parochial schools "would not violate the Constitution. It involves a public policy. We're asking for a service." Kennedy's New Frontier "would disregard the needs of 15 percent of the nation's school children."¹⁴ Still others wrote that Kennedy believed "religious faith is a personal affair, that ecclesiastical authorities had no special claim over public officials."¹⁵ Meanwhile, Boston's Roman Catholic diocesan weekly, *The Pilot*, looked to Congress for encouragement: "Plainly we have been working on the edge of this large question for many years but we have never probed it. Now is the time for Congress to take the initiative and seek a definitive answer."¹⁶

Most of the press attention focused on what Kennedy said about nonpublic schools. Equally important to the speech were its liberal tenets and legislative limitations. Kennedy's pronouncement of an educational crisis, marked by a lack of classrooms and teachers, was a product of the prevalent belief, coming from the successes of Public Laws 815 and 874, and the National Defense Act, that the enactment of federal education

¹³Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Education," February 20, 1961, p. 109.

¹⁴"The School Argument--What Leaders Say," *U.S. News & World Report* 50 (March 20, 1961), p. 79.

¹⁵Lawrence H. Fuchs, *John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism* (New York: Meredith Press, 1967), p. 224.

¹⁶"Battle Over Schools," *Time* 77 (March 17, 1961), p. 13.

legislation comes only amidst a perceived emergency like the Korean war or the Sputnik mission.

The discussion of a national crisis was further by the Bureau of the Budget which successfully urged modifications of aspects of the Hovde Task Force Report. The task force and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had recommended special attention be paid to the nation's large cities. Coincidentally, these regions had assured Kennedy's victory. But the Bureau of the Budget argued the "evidence is not clear" that the large urban areas "are worse off in terms of local financial resources for education than other areas of the nation." They concluded the proposal would be "deferred until . . . more study can be given."¹⁷

Kennedy's decision not to pursue giving special attention to the big cities (except for the proposed ten percent of federal funds to be channeled into "depressed areas and slum neighborhoods") was politically sound. The extensive demands of the program envisioned by the task force would have dangerously reinforced his image among the powerful rural and Southern interests in Congress as the guarantor of a Northern urban constituency. But Kennedy's failure to either broaden it to encompass rural areas of poverty or replace it with another program left Kennedy without any reliable alternative.

The Bureau of the Budget believed the further the education message strayed from S.8 (Senator McNamara's two-year school construction bill which had passed the Senate in 1960 by a roll call vote of 51 to 34) the more difficulty it would face. A bill similar to S.8 "would probably be reported out of committee in a few days and would be passed overwhelmingly without extensive debate . . . marking a significant administration

¹⁷McAndrews, p. 163.

achievement." As a political matter, "the big city congressmen already favor S.8 . . . which rural congressmen . . . would be repelled by the Hovde formula."¹⁸

While Kennedy's pronouncement of a crisis in education may have won him some votes for President, the 1960 election probably weakened the prospects for federal assistance. Not only was Kennedy narrowly elected, but for the first time in the twentieth century, the party entering the White House failed to increase its numbers in Congress. The Democrats lost one Senate and 22 House seats. In the House, "the Republicans lost seven incumbents, while displacing 29 Democrats, every one of them a Kennedy progressive."¹⁹ Since an education bill had not passed in 1960, it was unlikely that it would in 1961.

Throughout the postwar period, there had been periodic efforts to provide federal aid to education. The issues were many: whether federal aid should go to segregated schools, to Catholic schools; whether wealthy states should contribute to the poorer schools; would the federal government follow its investment in education by attempting to *seize* control of local school systems; did the states have the *right* to finance and administer schools. Each of these factors, some or all in combination, had proved too much for any president or congress to overcome in the 15 years preceding John Kennedy's election to the White House. It became obvious at the beginning of 1961 that all of these factors would enter the education debate. But many felt 1961 would be the year in which those forces would be overcome and an education program enacted. It would be the year because John Kennedy had repeatedly said so in his vigorous

¹⁸Memorandum of Conversation by Jack Forsythe, Wilbur Cohen, Mike Feldman regarding Education Bill, February 13, 1961, Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files, 1961-63, Box 61, JFKL.

¹⁹Sorensen, p. 379.

presidential campaign. He strongly believed a Wilsonian Presidential effort could accomplish anything.

Kennedy's support of federal aid to teachers' salaries can be seen as the fulfillment of a campaign promise. But with the illusion of a Democratic party majority and the emotional intensity of the issue in Congress, his stand was reasonable only as a bargaining instrument. The success of Kennedy's proposal would depend on the extent to which he would compromise.

Although designed as a three-year program, Kennedy called his education proposal a "limited beginning."²⁰ Kennedy "knew he lacked the votes to put through any of the sweeping reforms required to enable a majority to work its will in each house."²¹ His overtures to critics of *federal control* were the inclusion of impacted area aid, choice of equalization over flat grants, and reduction of the task force's price tag from thirty to fifteen dollars per child²² did little to calm their fears of an intrusive federal education bureaucracy. Clearly, Kennedy's education program was bold in that it defied the political odds. For a man "who courted danger, the education effort seemed made to order."²³

²⁰Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Education," February 20, 1961, p. 108.

²¹Sorensen, pp. 386-87.

²²Wicker, pp. 122-23.

²³McAndrews, p. 166.

A NEW FRONTIER FOR EDUCATION?

To the President's surprise, his education program quickly became the object of a confrontation which the print and electronic media relished. In a March 1st press conference, Kennedy repeated his separationist position. Citing the *Everson* decision, Kennedy invoked the child-benefit theory stating, "The Supreme Court made its decision . . . determining that the aid was to the child not to the school. . . . There isn't any room for debate on that subject." He added "The Constitution clearly prohibits [direct] aid to the school, to parochial schools."²⁴ One reporter asked Kennedy to explain why aiding parochial elementary and secondary students was unconstitutional when students in Roman Catholic institutions of higher learning were receiving financial assistance. President Kennedy replied by saying this help was in a different form, since it was "aid to the student, not to the school or college, and therefore, not to a particular religious group."²⁵ Kennedy's response had its origins in a February 8, 1961, confidential memorandum from General Counsel Alenon W. Willcox to Wilbur Cohen, Assistant Secretary to the President for Legislation. In it, Willcox suggested, "it is futile to argue whether a grant to a sectarian school is aiding education or aiding religion, because it is aiding both." He stressed, "we can only say that aid to education is so predominantly the purpose and effect that any incidental aid to religion is inconsequential."²⁶ Kennedy

²⁴*Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 107-111.

²⁵*Ibid*, pp. 107-111.

²⁶Confidential Memorandum from Alenon W. Willcox to Wilbur Cohen, February 8, 1961, Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files, Box 61, JFKL.

maintained the interjection of the church-state issue would mean certain defeat for the bill.

The same day as President Kennedy's news conference, Archbishop Karl Alter of the National Catholic Welfare Conference Education Department called a press conference to announce a four-point summary of the bishop's meeting. Alter reluctantly called the press conference to preempt any negative publicity which the NCWC did not want. The meeting of the NCWC board consisted of five Cardinals of the American Catholic Church plus the ten archbishops and bishops who headed departments. The four points were:

1. The question of whether or not there ought to be federal aid is a judgment to be based on objective facts connected with the schools of the country and consequently Catholics are free to take a position in accordance with the facts.
2. In the event there is federal aid to education, we are deeply convinced that in justice Catholic school children should be given the right to participate.
3. Respecting the form of participation, we hold it to be strictly within the framework of the Constitution that long-term, low interest loans to private institutions could be part of the federal aid program.
4. In the event that a federal aid program is enacted which excludes children in private schools, these children will be the victims of discriminatory legislation. There will be no alternative but to oppose such discrimination.²⁷

In a front page story, John Morris of the *New York Times* reported:

The highest prelates of the Roman Catholic Church met here today to plan what is expected to be a vigorous fight against President Kennedy's school aid program. The hierarchy . . . has decided to oppose any school aid

²⁷Price, pp. 28-29.

legislation that fails to help children attending private schools. . . . While the meeting was underway, President Kennedy repeated his opposition to any federal assistance for nonpublic schools.²⁸

The press thus had its enticing conflict between Catholic Church and Catholic President. Not all of the press responded in the same manner. In his column, *New York Times* correspondent James Reston saw the bishops move as one "likely to hurt both religion and education." But he went on to add that President Kennedy's insistence that "there isn't any room for debate on that subject [aid to parochial schools] . . . merely envenoms the debate that is now obviously in progress."²⁹

No other issue in the 1960 campaign had played a more dominant role than the religion of John F. Kennedy. He convincingly made the case that he would not be influenced by the Church. But the claims of the Catholic Church on the issue of federal aid to education could not be ignored. Within the new administration, the question of federal aid to religious schools began to be discussed in private. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Abraham Ribicoff, one of the earliest Kennedy supporters, believed the school package could not pass "unless there was something in it for the Catholics."³⁰

The same day, Ribicoff responded to Kennedy's request for information about the NDEA non-profit school loan procedure. Ribicoff noted that of the \$20.4 million appropriated for fiscal years 1959-61, the schools had requested only \$1.9 million.³¹

²⁸*New York Times*, March 2, 1961.

²⁹*New York Times*, March 10, 1961.

³⁰Wicker, p. 125.

³¹Letter and Statement from Ribicoff to Kennedy, March 7, 1961, President's Office Files, Box 79A, JFK Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

Kennedy could now argue that loans to parochial schools were not unconstitutional but unnecessary and unwanted. The same day Sorensen wrote to Kennedy, "My personal conviction is that the first Catholic President cannot now reverse his vote on the Morse Amendment in 1960, when he was a candidate, to support the first parochial aid school bill."³²

Yet at his March 8th press conference, the possibility of federal loans to parochial schools "took up almost a third of the time." Kennedy repeated that he felt there was no room for debate in regard to grants for parochial schools. He added, "my judgment has been that across-the-board loans are unconstitutional."³³ But the President retreated from his earlier position by saying, "there have been some kinds of loans to nonpublic schools which have been supported by the Congress and signed by the President and about which no constitution problem has yet been raised, and the NDEA is the best example."³⁴ Kennedy suggested that if Congress wanted to consider some type of loan program for nonpublic schools, it should be considered separately from the administration's proposals.

As *Time* observed, "Kennedy's 'no' [to parochial school aid] was a shade softer than the 'noes' of his 1960 campaign."³⁵ The President also appeared surprised and intimidated by the intensity of the attacks on his program. "I do not recall that [during the Eisenhower Administration] there was a great effort made . . . to provide across the board

³²"Administration Position to Aid to Parochial Schools," March 7, 1961, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, p. 2.

³³Price, p. 29.

³⁴Remarks at Presidential News Conference, March 8, 1961, *Public Papers*, Vol. 1961, pp. 155-56.

³⁵"Battle Over Schools," *Time* 77 (March 17, 1961), p. 12.

loans to an aid to education bill."³⁶ Kennedy maintained that *across-the-board* loans to parochial schools were unconstitutional. By these he meant loans that could be used for any purpose and by any school. But allowing for a possible compromise, he drew a clear distinction: "Special purpose loans for . . . building college classrooms or purchasing scientific equipment might be permissible." As a senator, he had supported the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which provided for just such special-purpose loans to private schools. He suggested, "There's obviously room for debate about loans because it's been debated."³⁷

While Kennedy retreated on the church-state question, the members of his administration privately sought a consistent position. On March 10th, an HEW memorandum examined several proposals for federal assistance to nonpublic schools.

The report listed:

[1] general federal loans for school construction; [2] limited federal loans for construction of non-instructional school facilities; [3] federal grants for ancillary school services; [and] [4] charting [a] federal financing corporation.³⁸

Other means of providing nonpublic school aid studied by the administration included grants to the states for "special education projects," a "loan program for all secular books in private and parochial schools," and the provision "for either loans or grants" to finance health services.³⁹

³⁶Remarks at Presidential News Conference, March 8, 1961, *Public Papers*, Vol. 1961, p. 156.

³⁷Wicker, p. 138.

³⁸"Alternative Proposals for Federal Assistance to Nonprofit, Private Elementary and Secondary Schools," March 10, 1961, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-3.

³⁹"The Education Bill--Constitutional Alternatives Which Include Catholics," undated, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL.

Although softening his position on aid to parochial schools, Kennedy maintained that any such provision in his general support measure would ensure the bill's defeat. On March 10th, Senators Mike Mansfield (Democrat, Montana) and Wayne Morse (Democrat, Oregon) and Representatives Frank Thompson (Democrat, New Jersey) and Adam Clayton Powell (Democrat, New York) announced their support of a separate loan bill.⁴⁰ At his March 15th news conference, Kennedy maintained that he "[would] be glad to cooperate with Congress in considering the matter of loans" but reiterated his hope of "passing the public school matter first."⁴¹

While Catholic and non-Catholic organizations prepared to flood members of Congress with their emotional reactions to the education issue, the Kennedy Administration sought a way out of the dilemma. HEW Secretary Ribicoff and Special White House Counsel Sorensen opened secret discussions with Bishop Hannon and Monsignors Tanner and Hurley of the NCWC. Out of these talks, a strategy emerged: the public school bill would proceed as planned, but the Congress, not the President, would initiate a private school loan program as an amendment to a measure extending the life of the National Defense Education Act.⁴² The expansion of Title III, Section 205 of the NDEA would include nonpublic school loans for the construction of science, mathematics, foreign language, physical fitness, and lunch facilities. The "exact language" of the amendment would require NCWC approval.⁴³ Ribicoff had wanted to

⁴⁰*New York Times*, March 11, 1961.

⁴¹"Remarks at Presidential News Conference, March 15, 1961, *Public Papers*, Vol. 1961, p. 184.

⁴²Sundquist, p. 190.

⁴³Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, April 12, 1961, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

"leave the door open" for Congress, and in the event of "heavy Catholic pressure," to adopt one of the "means for giving something to the Catholics."⁴⁴

But for a Catholic president to appear to be a party to such an agreement would be political suicide. So Sorensen closed his "administratively confidential" memo with the promise that "there was to be no mention or indication that the Administration had played any role or taken any position on this amendment or course of strategy."⁴⁵ Accordingly, on April 25th, President Kennedy formally recommended the extension of the NDEA, with the "pointed suggested . . . also appropriate that the Congress consider other proposals" as amendments.⁴⁶ The President, who throughout his campaign, and as late as March 1st, had vehemently rejected the bishops' position, had quietly joined their side. Although he had vacillated on education issues in his Congressional career; "the rapidity and degree of his reversals were quite startling."⁴⁷

Kennedy's decision to privately acquiesce was unquestionably political. He realized the bishops' power base of the urban north coincided with his. If he offended the NCWC, it might jeopardize his support among Catholic congressmen and the representatives of largely Catholic constituencies. Roughly four out of five Catholic voters chose Kennedy in 1960. Now these same supporters were besieging the White House and the Congress with mail demanding *justice* for their children.

⁴⁴Wicker, p. 128.

⁴⁵Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, April 12, 1961, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, p. 2.

⁴⁶Sundquist, p. 191.

⁴⁷McAndrews, p. 179.

Kennedy's new position signalled Congress to proceed with his comprehensive bill while acting separately on NDEA amendments. Described as a "strategy of subtraction," the administration sought to "deflect the controversy over parochial aid by removing it from the general aid bill and shifting it to the NDEA bill."⁴⁸ Acceptance of this strategy required the confidence and approval of key Catholic democrats in the House. If they questioned his motives or disagreed with Kennedy's two-bill approach, the strategy would fail.

In addition, Protestant Wayne Morse, senate sponsor of the Kennedy elementary and secondary education bill, and Jewish Abraham Ribicoff, from predominantly Catholic Connecticut, were strong advocates of parochial school assistance. But with Commissioner of Education Sterling McMurrin's minimal political interest and influence and Kennedy's continued absorption in crisis, Sorensen virtually stood alone in attempting to check the pro-Catholic sentiment engulfing the White House. When "Sorensen caved in," as one Congressional source described it, the President retreated.⁴⁹

Short of placing himself in a *no win* situation, and given the frequency and intensity of his campaign statements on the subject, Kennedy could have simply consulted with the NCWC prior to his education message. Lyndon Johnson would do so before issuing his similar position on the issue in the 1964 Presidential campaign. This enabled Johnson to avoid the political firestorm which surrounded John Kennedy. Monsignor Hurley stated that prior to the election and after Kennedy took office, there

⁴⁸Alan Shank, *Presidential Policy Leadership: Kennedy and Social Welfare* (University Press of America, 1980), p. 106.

⁴⁹Wicker, p. 139.

were several attempts by the NCWC to set up a discussion with Kennedy's staff. "I think they first considered we were nothing, we weren't that powerful a group, and we weren't. . . . We wanted to avoid a head-on collision. . . . He [Kennedy] miscalculated, his staff miscalculated."⁵⁰

Another possible solution had been suggested by the editor who reported Cardinal Spellman's views on education for *Time* in January. He believed one possible solution would be to give "direct grants to Catholic students, patterned after the G.I. Bill."⁵¹ Although not pursued by the administration, this system was later used in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address the problem.

Despite Kennedy's denial, the press saw through the transparent strategy of using the NDEA revision to aid parochial schools. In an editorial, the *New York Times* charged that the NDEA revision in Congress was "dominated by efforts to write into this legislation provisions for aid to private and parochial schools," which were "now being used as a cover under which there is an attempt to slip through large-scale Federal aid to nonpublic schools."⁵²

Whatever the motivations, one quickly consumed the others. Congressional leadership was most concerned about the politics of the Kennedy decision. Ultimately, the Kennedy general support bill's legislative journey would begin in Congressional committees and end in turmoil.

Shortly after receiving word of the compromise, Senators Clark of Pennsylvania and Morse of Oregon informed the White House of their opposition to a combined

⁵⁰McAndrews, p. 182.

⁵¹Muncie, p. 151.

⁵²*New York Times*, June 20, 1961.

package. Senator Morse joined with Democratic Congressman Frank Thompson of New Jersey in saying that joint consideration of the two bills "would only have the effect of killing all aid to education."⁵³ This represented a rejection of pressure from the Administration by Secretary Ribicoff, Majority Leader Mansfield and liaison coordinator O'Brien, for joint consideration of both general aid and NDEA amendments. But Morse, Thompson, and other Congressmen, along with NEA, "all feared that the parochial loan issue, even in its narrowest form, might kill the public support bill."⁵⁴

The Senate conducted hearings on the revised NDEA in April and May, the House in June. In an early exchange with the Kennedy's bill sponsor, Senator Wayne Morse, Monsignor Hochwalt conveyed his opinion that a separate parochial loan bill "wouldn't have much of a chance." Morse replied, "I would be rather inclined to hold tenaciously to the point of view you just expressed," though he promised to support such a measure after a public school bill had passed.⁵⁵ Metcalf of Montana, Ribicoff, and O'Brien agreed that the Kennedy compromise was simply bad politics.⁵⁶ The three Senators had determined that the votes simply were not there. Only 36 percent of the American people advocated federal aid to parochial schools.⁵⁷ Non-Catholics comprised 88 percent of the Senate and 80 percent of the House.⁵⁸ Monsignor Tanner wrote, "Many

⁵³Shank, p. 107.

⁵⁴Price, p. 149.

⁵⁵Bendiner, p. 184.

⁵⁶*New York Times*, May 17, 1961.

⁵⁷Philip Meranto, *The Politics of Federal Aid to Education in 1965: A Study in Political Innovation* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1967), p. 46.

⁵⁸"Religious Affiliations of Members of Congress," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 19 (April 7, 1961), pp. 626-628.

Catholics in the Senate and House are committed to federal aid." In late May he conceded, "we simply do not have the votes for parochial school aid."⁵⁹

On May 11th, the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee approved revisions of the general aid bill by a 12-2 vote with Senators Goldwater of Arizona and Dirksen of Illinois in opposition.

Floor debate on S.1021 began in the Senate on May 16th. In his explanation of the bill, Morse unexpectedly reversed himself by stipulating that nonpublic as well as public school pupils contribute to the equalization arrangement of the legislation. Morse argued, "Every child in a state is an educational burden to the state in the sense that the state has responsibilities toward every child . . . whether the child goes to a public school or a private school." Using such examples as fire protection, lunch programs, and other auxiliary services, Morse noted that "the states already give considerable assistance to children who go to private schools."⁶⁰ Morse's remarks attempting to garner support for parochial school aid would prove to be an exercise in brevity.

The following day Senators Willis Randolph of West Virginia and Frank Lausche of Ohio attacked Morse's allocation formula. Lausche offered an amendment to restore the Kennedy plan of counting only public school students. He maintained on May 24th that the intent of his amendment was to "ensure that the Senate had guarded against bringing the needs of parochial schools into question."⁶¹ By a 61-32 margin, the Senate dismissed the parochial loan amendment.

⁵⁹McAndrews, p. 184.

⁶⁰*Congressional Record*, May 16, 1961, p. 8060.

⁶¹*Ibid*, May 17, 1961, p. 8741.

On May 25th, the Senate passed S.1021, the general school aid as a separate measure without the NDEA bill or the parochial school amendment. The vote was 49-34, with Democrats voting for it 41-12 and Republicans against it 22-8.⁶² The bill appropriated \$2.5 billion for operation, maintenance, and construction of public schools and for teachers' salaries. The Senate had done its work, developing a consensus on the religious issue because, as Hugh Douglas Price wrote, "compromise was accomplished within most Senators themselves, but would have to be negotiated between members in the House."⁶³

The House was another matter. The House "had always been the graveyard for federal aid to education."⁶⁴ The Senate has constituencies comprised of entire states. Within many states, there are areas of Protestant and Catholic voting strength. However, many House members represent small districts which are often relatively homogeneous. Compromise in the House over aid to parochial schools would have to be between legislators representing districts with a higher concentration of Catholics and those representatives in the predominantly Protestant districts. This became a crucial problem in the House Rules Committee when appeals for party loyalty were met by responses to constituency pressure.

The test of the Kennedy program on the House floor would not come unless it first survived the notorious House Rules Committee. The committee would have six new members in 1961. More importantly, the eight-man "Rayburn majority" in the Rules

⁶²Muncie, p. 154.

⁶³Price, pp. 51-52.

⁶⁴Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Education for the Poor: A Study of the Origins and Implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), p. 62.

Committee included three Catholic Democrats: Ray Madden of Indiana, James Delaney of New York, and Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. (who represented John F. Kennedy's old Boston-Cambridge district in Massachusetts). The enlargement of the committee was thought to have insured a favorable vote on the Kennedy plan. But without the cooperation of the three Catholic Democrats, the Administration bill could not be cleared.

April would represent a difficult month for the Kennedy Administration. Not only were communist forces in Laos continuing to advance, but the American supported Cuban counter-revolution at the Bay of Pigs failed. Both represented major setbacks to the President. Kennedy was also involved in deciding what was negotiable with Khrushchev in the Berlin crisis. All of these problems had flared up as the President and his supporters in Congress were involved in a series of maneuvers over the parochial school issue.

The House subcommittee hearings on the NDEA had begun rather uneasily when Dr. Sterling McMurrin, the new Commissioner of Education, declined to take an official stand on the proposals for aid to nonpublic schools. Neither the President nor Secretary Ribicoff appeared very anxious to be committed to support of aid to parochial schools. Foreign policy issues dominated the President's attention, while the education issue might prove damaging to Secretary Ribicoff's availability for nomination "to a seat on the Supreme Court, should a vacancy occur."⁶⁵

On May 24th, the Committee on Education and Labor approved an aid bill by a straight party vote of 18 Democrats to 13 Republicans. Chairman Adam Clayton Powell resisted efforts to include either an antisegregation amendment or to add special purpose classroom construction aid for private schools. The Committee Republicans unanimously

⁶⁵Price, p. 61.

opposed the bill as "unwarranted federal intrusion into matters properly of local and state concern" that would "subsidize the nation's teachers" leading to an "increasing interest in what teachers teach."⁶⁶ This position simply echoed previous Republican arguments. For example, Richard Nixon had made the same statements throughout his Presidential campaign, including the first televised debate with then Senator Kennedy.

However, Republican opposition did not prove to be the fatal blow to Kennedy's education bill. Rather, it would be the unresponsiveness of the reformed Rules Committee to Kennedy's first major piece of domestic legislation. A majority of the Rules Committee were firmly opposed to any parochial aid. Three Southern Democrats who usually sided with Speaker Rayburn--James Trimble of Arkansas, Homer Thornberry of Texas, and Carl Elliot of Alabama--were under pressure to oppose any nonpublic aid.⁶⁷ Added to these three were Chairman Smith of Virginia and William Colmer of Mississippi who opposed both parochial aid and the Administration's bill. The five Republicans were similarly opposed to both public and private aid. This left the three Catholic Democrats--Madden, O'Neill, and Delaney--as crucial to the Administration's educational bill.

On June 20th, the Rules Committee, meeting in executive session, voted to postpone its consideration of the public school bill until the conclusion of the hearings on the NDEA. The five Republicans, in addition to Smith and Colmer, resorted to various delaying tactics, in the hopes of scheduling federal aid off the calendar. Catholic Democrats O'Neill and Delaney served notice to have the House vote on the amended NDEA before it considered the public school bill.⁶⁸ A week later, a 19-11 majority of the

⁶⁶1961 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 224.

⁶⁷Shank, pp. 110-11.

⁶⁸*New York Times*, June 21, 1961.

House Education and Labor Committee reported the revised NDEA. The committee rejected amendments proposed by Representative Quie of Minnesota to eliminate parochial school loans and to attach an antisegregation rider. It did adopt New Jersey Representative Frelinghuysen's motion to limit the cost of parochial school loans to \$125 million for three years.

Although none of the three measures (the public school bill, the NDEA expansion, and aid to higher education) had been cleared by the Rules Committee, they had been discussed on the floor of the House. On May 2nd, Representative Frelinghuysen spoke on the education program during the first one hundred days of the Kennedy Administration. On June 29th, Frelinghuysen was recognized for two hours to present a "Report on American Education" prepared by the House Republic Policy Committee.⁶⁹

Opposition to federal aid seemed to be mounting outside Congress also. At the annual Governor's Conference in Honolulu, a resolution opposing aid to teachers' salaries was narrowly defeated by a 24-23 vote. Included in the majority vote were three territorial governors appointed by the President. On the same day, Republican House leader Charles Halleck read a letter from former President Eisenhower strongly opposing the Administration's aid to education proposal. Appearing on a weekly televised report of the Republican House and Senate leaders, Halleck quoted Eisenhower's warning that the proposals "would ultimately result in federal control of education."⁷⁰ Fears of federal control had also been fueled by the ill-timed release of a 60-page HEW pamphlet entitled "A Federal Education Agency of the Future."⁷¹

⁶⁹Price, pp. 63-64.

⁷⁰*New York Times*, June 29, 1961.

⁷¹Price, p. 64.

President Kennedy, who had just returned from his European meetings with DeGaulle and Khrushchev, received the bad news at his regular Tuesday morning meeting with Congressional leaders. Informally, Rayburn reportedly privately told Kennedy the education bill was "as dead as slavery." For the public, however, Rayburn would only indicate that the "bill is in trouble."⁷²

After the House Education and Labor Committee's 19-11 vote, Chairman Powell remarked there "was so much controversy that someone's got to blow the whistle" on the warring factions.⁷³ That someone was President Kennedy. The "absence of presidential leadership seriously threatened House approval" of either general aid or the NDEA amendments.⁷⁴ His intervention in the congressional battle could prove decisive. The White House wanted to change the votes of Rules members Delaney and O'Neill. Their votes had resulted in the Rules Committee delaying action of June 20. As it turned out, only O'Neill could be persuaded to change his vote. Delaney had indicated in early July that he would provide the vote to block federal aid when he said all three bills being considered should be replaced with a non-discriminatory measure.⁷⁵ All efforts to change Delaney's vote failed.

On July 18, 1961, Representative Colmer suggested that the Rules Committee table all three of the education bills. By an 8-7 margin, the committee passed Colmer's motion and in an afternoon of acrimony killed Kennedy's education program. The deciding vote cast by Delaney provided the margin of difference, along with "Judge"

⁷²Ibid, p. 62.

⁷³1961 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 224.

⁷⁴Shank, p. 111.

⁷⁵Muncie, p. 155.

Smith, Coler and the five Republicans. Larry O'Brien, Kennedy's Congressional liaison, wrote that despite pressure from the White House,

Nothing could change Delaney's mind. Ribicoff and I talked to him, many times, to no avail. The President had at least two long, off-the-record talks with him in which he tried desperately to bring Delaney around, but Jim was adamant.⁷⁶

The reason for Delaney's decision was clear: the religious issue. In an interview, Delaney stated: "I voted against the bill principally because it [the general support measure] was a discriminatory bill. I don't believe in a single, monolithic system of education."⁷⁷ *Newsweek* quoted an unnamed member of the House Education and Labor Committee as saying, "The NCWC shot the bill down, if it didn't kill it altogether."⁷⁸ A week before the Delaney vote, the *New Republic* observed, "If the desperately needed school bill fails in Congress much of the responsibility will be with the Catholic hierarchy."⁷⁹

While the press continued to emphasize the church-state conflict, the reality behind the Rules Committee vote was quite different. Delaney was the only member of the 15 who voted for religious reasons. Other Catholic Democrats on the committee--Ray Madden of Indiana and Thomas P. O'Neill of Massachusetts--voted against the tabling motion, as did Bible Belt Democrats James Trimble, Carl Elliot, and Homer Thornberry.

⁷⁶Laurence F. O'Brien, *The Final Victories: A Life in Politics from John F. Kennedy to Watergate* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), p. 127.

⁷⁷Francis P. Coravon, ed., "Interview with Congressman Delaney," *America* 105 (August 26, 1961), p. 662.

⁷⁸"Who Killed the Bill?" *Newsweek* 58 (August 21, 1961), p. 58.

⁷⁹"Education Over a Barrel," *New Republic* 145 (July 10, 1961), p. 2.

While Delaney did cast the decisive vote, his vote was truly his own. He maintained, "I did not consult any member of the [Catholic] hierarchy before making up my mind how to vote in the Rules Committee,"⁸⁰ and the evidence supports his assertion. The NCWC had been working for four months to enact the NDEA expansion. Monsignor Hochwalt's Senate testimony defended the NDEA proposal. Although Hochwalt "refused to commit himself to the Administration bill in the House Hearings, . . . the bishops were still behind the Kennedy legislation."⁸¹ The key was Delaney who reflected Catholic fears that "federal aid for public school teachers' salaries posed potentially ruinous competition for poorly paid Catholic lay teachers."⁸²

Moreover, Delaney had very little confidence that if he "approved the public school bill, the private school-NDEA bill would survive as a separate measure."⁸³ Delaney "concluded, and no doubt rightly, that once he agreed to the public school bill, the NDEA bill would be mutilated or killed."⁸⁴ Many members of the House did not want the responsibility of voting on the two bills, which by then had generated hundreds of thousands of messages from their constituents. A southern member was quoted as saying, "When Delaney cast his vote, you could hear a sigh of relief all over the Capitol, and Congressmen were shaking Delaney's hand for hours afterward."⁸⁵

⁸⁰Coravon, ed., "Interview with Congressman Delaney," p. 663.

⁸¹McAndrews, p. 219.

⁸²Graham, p. 22.

⁸³Sundquist, p. 192.

⁸⁴Sorensen, p. 404.

⁸⁵Bendiner, pp. 194-95.

Kennedy was aware that religion had played a minor role in the Rules Committee defeat. A briefing paper for his July 19th news conference noted, "No amount of Presidential leadership could change the five Republicans and two Dixiecrats who do not support the ticket anyway, or the one Catholic Democrat to whom every kind of appeal was made."⁸⁶ At his news conference, Kennedy observed that "seven of those eight votes came from members of Congress who were not sympathetic to the legislation, nor supported me in the last election."⁸⁷

Despite having all three of the Administration's major education bills bottled up in the House Rules Committee, Kennedy did not want to admit defeat. Two days after the House Rules debacle, HEW Secretary Ribicoff presented Kennedy with possible compromises that would enable the Administration to claim "something significant in the education field this year, and would defer the controversial issues until a later date."⁸⁸

Kennedy chose a combination of Ribicoff's legislative packages: a one-year continuation of impacted area aid and an unamended NDEA, construction of schools in areas with severe enrollment problems and a college aid bill.⁸⁹ The Kennedy decision shared by Ribicoff and several Congressmen omitted the two most troublesome features of the original Kennedy bill in the House Education and Labor Committee: aid for teachers' salaries and permanent federal support. Kennedy accepted the compromise proposal and Congressman Thompson introduced it as HR 8890. A second bill, HR

⁸⁶Statement for Kennedy, undated, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, p. 6.

⁸⁷"The President's News Conference of July 19, 1961," *Public Papers*, Vol. 1961, p. 516.

⁸⁸Memorandum from Ribicoff to Kennedy, July 20, 1961, Box 32, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-4.

⁸⁹*Ibid*, pp. 1-4.

8900, covered the Administration's proposals for \$1.5 billion in loans and grants for higher education.

A draft of the new Kennedy bill, presented to the White House by Wilbur Cohen on August 7th, received a hostile response from Congressional leaders.⁹⁰ Speaker Rayburn objected to the inclusion of the higher education bill on the grounds that it might jeopardize the success of the bill. On August 14th, Sorensen urged the President to forestall Congressional criticism on impacted aid and the NDEA with an appeal to the Democratic leadership to accept "the compromise measure advanced by Secretary Ribicoff."⁹¹ Sorensen also outlined several possible arguments for the President when he met with Congressional leaders. He should maintain that the first Catholic president could not easily sign the NDEA and college aid bills, with their allowance for nonpublic schools, without enacting a public school bill. He should admit the damage that the education battle was exacting on his reputation and leadership abilities. He should emphasize that the Ribicoff compromise was the best possible alternative to another round of turmoil which smothered the original bill.⁹²

In discussions with Sam Rayburn, Sorensen urged Kennedy to stress the omission of teacher's salaries. With John McCormack, he might emphasize the inclusion of parochial schools in the NDEA. To Mike Mansfield, he could argue the necessity of employing the aid to impacted areas and the NDEA as a means to obtain the

⁹⁰Memorandum and Preliminary Draft of Emergency Educational Aid Act of 1961 from Cohen to Kennedy, August 7, 1961, Box 32, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

⁹¹Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, August 14, 1961, Box 32, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

⁹²Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, August 15, 1961, Box 32, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

construction bill. And to Hubert Humphrey there would be an appeal to withhold criticism of this diluted approach.⁹³

Kennedy's appeal succeeded, as the party leadership emerged from the meeting determined to support the President's program. In his report to the President on the meeting, Senator Morse urged Kennedy to meet with the entire Education Subcommittee Democratic contingent (Morse, Hill, Randolph, Clark, McNamara) to "boost their enthusiasm, and demonstrate Presidential interest and leadership."⁹⁴

But President Kennedy was not inclined to directly intervene in the education struggle. During late July and August he focused on winning congressional approval for his controversial program for long-term financing of foreign aid. Members of the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committee's "rather than those involved in the education fight, were invited to the White House."⁹⁵

An August 14th memorandum from Sorensen warned Kennedy that

There is no real possibility of the bill receiving approval without clearing the House Rules Committee. This means that it must receive the support of either Congressman Delaney or a Republican member.⁹⁶

Kennedy hoped to bypass the Rules Committee and get a direct vote from the full House. He had suggested as much as his July 19th news conference. Kennedy stated, "the members of Congress who support this will use these procedures which are available to

⁹³Ibid, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁴Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, August 17, 1961, Box 32, Sorensen Papers, JFKL.

⁹⁵Price, p. 65.

⁹⁶Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, August 14, 1961, Box 32, Sorensen Papers, JFKL.

them under the rules of the House to bring this to a vote."⁹⁷ The procedure Kennedy referred to was the seldom-used Parliamentary procedure of *Calendar Wednesday*. Designed to circumvent the House Rules Committee structure in an emergency, debate would begin and end on the same day.

Congressman Frank Thompson, House sponsor of Kennedy's first elementary and secondary education bill, foresaw a "reasonable chance" for passage of his second. On August 16th, Kennedy, Ribicoff, and the Democrats on the House Education and Labor Committee all urged Congressman Delaney to accept HR 8890. The President assured Delaney that aid for teachers' salaries would not be added to the bill.⁹⁸ Delaney called the construction measure reasonable, but stopped short of endorsing it. But two weeks prior to the 1961 vote, Delaney expressed satisfaction that the Ribicoff compromise had removed permanent federal support.⁹⁹

On August 24th, Speaker Rayburn told the President that because he did not think Howard Smith's Rules Committee would promptly report the bill, he would offer it to the House via the *Calendar Wednesday* procedure.

Five days later, the House Education and Labor Committee reported the legislation, again sponsored by Congressman Thompson, on a straight party vote of 16-12. But the Administration's compromise satisfied no one. This watered-down one-year "emergency" school construction bill was "denounced by Catholics as discriminatory, by

⁹⁷"The Presidential News Conference of July 19, 1961," *Public Papers*, Vol. 1961, p. 516.

⁹⁸"Points to Stress to Delaney," undated, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL.

⁹⁹*New York Times*, August 18, 1961.

the NEA as inadequate, and by the House Republicans as a railroad job."¹⁰⁰ The bill was rushed through the House Education and Labor Committee, with discussion limited to 70 minutes. Republican Congressman Frelinghuysen described the Republican opposition. He charged the Democrats with an "inexcusable abuse of the legislative process in the way this bill was submitted to our committee for consideration."¹⁰¹ The following day, August 30th, was *Calendar Wednesday*.

On Wednesday, August 30th, Chairman Adam Clayton Powell moved that the House consider HR 8890. It did by overwhelmingly rejecting it 242-170. The defeat consisted of 160 Republicans, 70 Southern Democrats, and 12 non-Southern Democrats. The higher education companion bill, HR 8900, was then sent to the Rules Committee, where it remained buried. Of the 22 Republicans who left their party on the Rules Committee expansion, 19 returned to the fold to defeat HR 8900.¹⁰² Federal aid was dead. The *New York Times* editorial of September 6th stated the "failure of leadership in the White House, in the Department of HEW, and in the House of Representatives gives little cause for hope. Compromise has been the order of the day, and the result has been a fiasco for Federal aid to education."¹⁰³

The final blow came when both houses passed a bill extending impacted area aid and the unamended NDEA for two years. Kennedy had hoped both would be renewed for one year while attempting to link both programs to his general aid legislation. On October 3rd, a few hours before a pocket veto would have killed the measure, Kennedy,

¹⁰⁰Graham, p. 24.

¹⁰¹*Congressional Record*, August 29, 1961, p. 17427.

¹⁰²*Ibid*, August 30, 1961, pp. 17577-17578.

¹⁰³*New York Times*, September 6, 1961.

with "extreme reluctance" signed the "unsound and uneconomical"¹⁰⁴ bills into law. The first-year efforts of the most education-conscious president in American history had lessened the chances for federal aid. An editorial in the Catholic journal, *Commonweal*, summed up the plight of federal aid to education: "The safest statement one can make about the recent debate . . . is that it began in confusion and ended in hysteria."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴Ibid, October 4, 1961.

¹⁰⁵"Aid to Education," *Commonweal* 75, (November 3, 1961), p. 140.

CHAPTER V

"WE'LL BE BACK NEXT YEAR"

At his press conference following the Calendar Wednesday fiasco, Kennedy observed that "everyone is for education but they're all for a different bill. . . . So we will be back next year."¹

A combination of uncontrollable and controllable forces drove Kennedy to defeat on federal aid to education. His religion, his party affiliation, his narrow Presidential victory, his slender Congressional majority, and the problems of the Cold War abroad were matters over which he had little sway. But he could regulate his relations with the educational groups and Congress, as well as his strategy for federal aid for education. While Kennedy might not have been able to unite the education lobbies, he could have done less to divide them. By excluding the NCWC and the NAACP from the formulation of his original education program, and in retreating from the NEA and AFT positions, Kennedy had at various times alienated all major education lobbies.

Who killed federal aid? In describing the educational failure, newspapers and editorials suggested that the religious issue had killed the bill. But as Kennedy was himself aware, the Administration's inability to pass federal aid was more complex than the papers reported. The religious issue was a dramatic one, but the roll call vote revealed that 90 percent of the Catholic Democrats in the House backed H.R. 8890.²

¹"The Presidential News Conference of 1961," *Public Papers*, Vol. 1961, p. 574.

²Meranto, p. 94.

It was easy to blame the Roman Catholic Church for the defeat of the first bill and, as many Democrats did, to blame the Republicans for the loss of the second.

Federal aid for teachers' salaries and permanent federal support killed the initial bill. A majority of the House and House Rules Committee opposed both. The House Republican Policy Committee estimated in August 1961 that had the Kennedy bill survived the Rules Committee, up to 90 percent of House Republicans would have opposed it on the floor.³

The unnecessary Parliamentary maneuver of Calendar Wednesday killed H.R. 8890. A majority of the House and House Rules Committee would likely have approved it had it been open to debate and possible amendment in committee or on the floor. A needless climate of partisanship, established by Kennedy and fueled by House Minority Leader Hallack, killed federal aid while leaving a feeling of recrimination not soon to end. Wilbur Cohen believed that H.R. 8890 was "rushed into a vote without adequate consideration and preparation."⁴ Ribicoff, in an October memorandum, conceded that H.R. 8890 was "rushed to the floor under circumstances where many Republicans could say they never had a chance to see it."⁵

In the area of federal aid to education, Kennedy acted as if he had won a landslide victory, and Congress had ridden in on his coattails. But such an idea defied reality as did his first education proposal and the legislative strategy accompanying his second. Mrs. Jim Bolling, wife of Democratic Congressman Richard Bolling and member

³James Deakin, "Very, Very Educational," *New Republic* 45 (August 7, 1961), p. 13.

⁴Letter from Cohen to Hugh Davis Graham, April 20, 1981, attached to interview of Wilbur Cohen by Charles T. Morrissey, November 11, 1964, p. 41.

⁵Memorandum from Ribicoff to Kennedy, October 6, 1961, Presidential Office Files, Box 79A, JFK Papers, JFKL, p. 3.

of the Congressional liaison staff of Kennedy's HEW, discussed the atmosphere in which Sorensen, Cohen, and others devised the first bill:

They had the Hovde Report and thought it would be great to have an education bill. I think a lot of this was "My God, we've won. It's marvelous. We're going to have an education bill," without too much thought really how hard it would be to get it. . . . I think that they were more taken with the substance than they were with what their political problems were.⁶

They also displayed a certain arrogance, as if "they could make the legislation and cram it down the Committee's throat. Well, there's a resistance to that."⁷

As the first Catholic president, Kennedy was politically condemned to oppose parochial school aid in his elementary and secondary school program. But his secret encouragement of the NDEA "proposal" for Catholics opened his administration to charges of duplicity and ineptness. It backfired on him and his repeated denials were not resourceful. Congressman Frank Thompson who had sponsored both Kennedy education bills in the House recalled a meeting in which aid to parochial schools had been discussed. With the President, Thompson, Ribicoff, and Sorensen, Kennedy "took the position that under no circumstances should we cave in on the issue and give aid directly to parochial schools." In responding to a question about how clear the President had been on the provisions of the bill, Thompson answered, "No. I wasn't sure when I left the meeting just what his position was."⁸

⁶Transcript, "Jim Grant Bolling Oral History Interview," March 1, 1966, JFKL, pp. 28, 47.

⁷Ibid, p. 46.

⁸Transcript, "Frank Thompson Oral History Interview," March 10, 1965, JFKL, p. 19.

By revising his stand on parochial aid, Kennedy abandoned a principle "that he himself had insisted upon."⁹ By doing so, he reduced the confidence of legislators supporting his general aid bill. Kennedy's ability to lead Congress was called into question when he shifted the burden from the White House to Capitol Hill to resolve the religious issue. As one western liberal noted before the vote, "I was willing to die for the education bill. But there's been so much maneuvering and so much controversy that I don't care anymore."¹⁰

The President's policy of *cautious liberalism* proved disappointing after the brave rhetoric of the campaign. Kennedy's press secretary Pierre Salinger wrote that the President "had bold aid controversial concepts for moving the nation ahead that had to be sold both to the Congress and the public, and no one could sell them more effectively than he."¹¹ Yet in the education field, his immense popularity became a wasted resource. His education program became a postponed promise rather than a fulfilled campaign pledge.

Kennedy also never mastered the Hill. He came from the Senate, "where training is in compromise and adjustment rather than in the exercise of executive talents."¹² Senator Joseph Clark of Pennsylvania noted that Kennedy was "not very deft with

⁹Wicker, p. 145.

¹⁰Fuller, p. 101.

¹¹Pierre Salinger, *With Kennedy* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966), p. 129.

¹²Carroll Kilpatrick, "The Kennedy Style and Congress," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, (Winter 1963).

Congress . . . he never considered himself in and of the Congress . . . he was too willing to compromise on . . . many occasions. . . . He was never willing to declare war."¹³

Lawrence O'Brien felt the President should be protected from becoming overly involved. "I'm overcautious about overextending him. . . . I try to avoid using him with Congressmen; there are too many demands already on his time." While Kennedy did call frequently during the Rules Committee fight, on the whole, the White House resisted employing this tactic. "We discovered that we have to keep him off the phone when things get tough."¹⁴ With this there was a contrast between the gallant expectations and the cautious operation of the administration. In it Kennedy appeared to make a display more for the record than for the anticipated results.

The fact that Delaney had been allowed to sink the most important part of the new President's legislative program and "escape unscathed" showed that the President "could be defied with impunity."¹⁵ Significantly, many Congressmen lost their respect for him while others lost their fear.

A serious omission by the Kennedy Administration was not in calling upon liberal Republican Congressmen such as Peter Frelinghuysen of New Jersey and others in planning its legislative program. A liberal Republican described the fate of the second measure in a June 1961 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*: "They [the Kennedy

¹³Transcript, "Joseph Clark Oral History Interview," December 15, 1965, JFKL, pp. 61, 86.

¹⁴Abraham Holtzman, *Legislative Liaison: Executive Leadership in Congress* (New York: Rand McNally and Company, 1970), p. 247.

¹⁵Wicker, p. 146.

Administration] never talk to us [moderate and liberal Republicans] to ask our advice. They took us for granted and now they don't have us."¹⁶

It was perhaps fitting that Kennedy, whose years in Congress were marked by frequent shifts on federal aid to education, should inherit the leadership of a movement in transition. In the first year of his Presidency, Kennedy saw permanent support as a way to correct a temporary crisis. He finished the year by pragmatically returning to a position he had adhered to prior to his Presidency.

1962: IN RETREAT OR IN HIDING?

In his otherwise favorable assessment of the Kennedy presidency, Irving Bernstein has written, "if the theme of federal aid for education in 1961 was defeat, in 1962 it became fragmentation."¹⁷ There were so many proposals circulating around Capitol Hill that it was difficult to tell them apart. Also, aside from the religious issue, the supporters of federal aid fought among themselves.

At the beginning of his second year as President, Kennedy confronted the dilemma of whether to press the battle for general support or surrender to the odds. He chose to do neither.

On October 6, 1961, Ribicoff sent Kennedy a five page postmortem memo which analyzed the failure of 1961 and suggested he amend the NDEA with a new bill, the Emergency Educational Opportunities Act of 1962, which would fund teacher aid and training, improvements in educational quality, and emergency school construction for one

¹⁶*Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 1961.

¹⁷Irving Bernstein, *Promises Kept: John F. Kennedy's New Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 234.

year to school districts with demonstrated need. Ribicoff argued that "a broad program of grants to states for public construction and teachers' salaries is virtually impossible to pass."¹⁸ He urged Kennedy to abandon such a state grant program, or at least postpone it until 1963, and press instead in 1962 for the higher education bill and the medical professions bill:

Then face squarely the fact that a general aid bill for construction and teachers' salaries has been killed by the House Rules Committee and cannot be enacted by this Congress, make this an issue for the '62 elections with a commitment to press for it in '63, but insist that the needs are so great that some steps must be taken now.¹⁹

The President may have agreed with this shrewd advice, but he did not take it. An early January meeting between Kennedy and Congressional leaders of both parties designed to heal partisan conflict addressed reciprocal trade, foreign aid, civil defense, postal rates, federal pay raises, and the United Nations bond issues, but not education.²⁰ So when Kennedy, in his State of the Union message on January 11, 1962, announced that he would continue to push for enactment of his failed 1961 legislation (long since buried in Judge Smith's Rules Committee graveyard), he began and ended his legislative campaign for general elementary and secondary education legislation.

Instead, Kennedy began a move into other areas of education, indicating a shift in the terms of the educational debate. He unveiled a plan to improve the nation's

¹⁸Memorandum from Ribicoff to Kennedy, October 6, 1961, Presidential Office Files, Box 79A, JFK Papers, JFKL, p. 4.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 9.

²⁰Memorandum from Sorensen to Kennedy, January 6, 1962, President's Office Files, Box 50, JFK Papers, JFKL.

scientific capacity through federal funding for instructional materials, laboratories, and additional National Science Foundation institutes for mathematics and science teachers. He also introduced a plan for adult literacy through the federal support of adult education, as well as schooling for the children of migratory farm workers, the expansion of educational television, and to increase special education for the handicapped.

In the same address, Kennedy argued that the federal government's task was not merely to ensure education, but to enhance it. With his accent on "educational quality" and his assertion of a "proper Federal role of assistance and leadership," Kennedy for the first time articulated an argument for permanent federal support which omitted dubious statistics and alarming projections.²¹ As Laurence McAndrews has observed, "it remained for Kennedy, and others, to resolve the contradiction between his diagnosis of an emergency and his prescription for a permanent federal presence in education."²²

But it became clear that the Kennedy administration's strategy for 1962 was seriously flawed. As one historian of education, Hugh Davis Graham, has suggested, by pressing for the aid to both lower and higher education bills in 1962, Kennedy was "risking mutual contamination by the religious and partisan controversies."²³ Kennedy's message had clearly upset some of the estimates of his own supporters, who had hoped that he would delay any drive for elementary and secondary school aid until 1963. At the same time, some educators were dismayed that persons close to the White House were indicating that the President was determined to settle other parts of the package, without

²¹ John F. Kennedy, "Special Message on Education, February 6, 1962," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Vol. 1962 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), pp. 110-114.

²² McAndrews, p. 263.

²³ Graham, p. 29.

action on aid to the public and secondary schools. Whatever the sincerity of Kennedy's intentions, Congress basically ignored his general-aid bill.

Worse, the administration fell into disarray. When Kennedy disregarded Ribicoff's advice on education policy for 1962, Ribicoff cast his eyes on a Senate seat from Connecticut, and in July of 1962, he resigned to run for (and win) that seat. Wilbur Cohen's recollections are not flattering:

Ribicoff left because, first he is a political animal; he is not an administrator . . . he was in fact an extremely poor administrator; one of the poorest we had as Secretary of HEW. . . . He was interested particularly in his own political future. He was very self-centered and egotistical.²⁴

Ribicoff was replaced by Mayor Anthony Celebrezze of Cleveland. According to Cohen, while he turned out to be a very good secretary, he was picked because of his credentials as an Italian-American to help Ted Kennedy's race for the Senate in Massachusetts. On July 27th, Sterling McMurrin, the Commissioner at the Office of Education, resigned, and was not succeeded by Francis Keppel until December.

Dr. McMurrin was the first commissioner in recent history to be chosen from higher education. As a professor of philosophy from the University of Utah rather than from secondary or elementary education, and as a non-member of the NEA, he was offensive to the National Education Association almost by definition. But McMurrin was the administration's fourth choice, all of whom had declined the offer. Leaders of the NEA considered McMurrin to have been "the least informed Commissioner ever."²⁵ On

²⁴Transcript, "Wilbur Cohen Oral History Interview," April 21, 1969, JFK Library, pp. 1-2.

²⁵Lawrence Kay Pettit, "The Policy Process in Congress: Passing the Higher Education Academic Facilities Act of 1963" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1965), p. 255.

the other hand, representatives of the higher education groups expressed no explicit opinion regarding McMurrin, and considered him to have been a disinterested commissioner whose authority was restricted by Ribicoff anyway. Francis Keppel recalls that:

Ribicoff decided to handle all the politics on Capitol Hill and McMurrin would sit back and think high thoughts in the Office of Education. Well the politics fell apart something terrible, and . . . a bill which had been put together with baling wire for higher education got on the floor of the House.²⁶

But the administration's flawed strategy was also hurt by partisan maneuvering and political accident. As Ribicoff had pointed out, there was a slim possibility for assistance to higher education based on bipartisan support. Though having wide support in both houses early in the year, by July any chance at a bill had been lost. The combination of fierce NEA opposition, House and Senate inflexibility on their respective bills, and Kennedy's inactivity led to its defeat. In addition, by late July the administration's leadership had quit, as both Ribicoff and McMurrin resigned.

Of Kennedy's categorical objectives, only the educational television bill became law in the 1962 session. Congress adjourned before federal assistance for the education of the handicapped, education for migratory labor, adult literacy, adult educational, and educational quality received rules in the House. As one Democrat put it, "Charlie Halleck [House Minority Leader] wasn't going to let the Democrats have a college aid bill in September of an election year."²⁷

²⁶Transcript, "Francis Keppel Oral History Interview," September 18, 1964, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

²⁷Bernstein, p. 237.

Kennedy had hoped to take advantage of his office during the Congressional races of 1962 to secure a more cooperative legislature. The Cuban Missile Crisis cut short his ambitious campaign itinerary, but it did improve the chances of many of his would-be allies in Congress. Kennedy's popular conduct of the emergency deprived Republicans of a weapon which they had considered their most popular.²⁸

Not since 1934 had a presidential party fared so well in a mid-term election. On the other hand, Republicans were quick to point out, the Democrats had scarcely recouped their large losses from Kennedy's negative coattail effect in 1960. This had left far fewer vulnerable seats for Republicans to recapture in 1962. Kennedy had clearly not altered the balance of power on federal aid in the crucial House of Representatives. While he successfully minimized Democratic defeats, he further antagonized important Republicans beyond the limits of political wisdom with his harsh politicking.

The 1962 election was not a referendum on federal aid to education; other issues were more important in the voters' minds. To the extent that national issues determine Congressional elections, fiscal, health, farm, and foreign policy concerns loomed larger than education.²⁹ Kennedy's campaign speeches barely touched education and when they did, they primarily addressed college aid.³⁰

²⁸On October 16th, the Chairman of the Republican National Committee, Republican William Miller, said, "If we were asked to state the issue [in the campaign] in one word, that word would be Cuba--symbol of the tragic irresolution of the Administration" (*New York Times*, October 17, 1962). On December 7th, Miller and Republican Bob Wilson of California, Chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, attributed their party's poor showing at the polls to the missile crisis (*New York Times*, December 8, 1962).

²⁹*Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 20 (October 19, 1962), p. 1933.

³⁰At campaign stops in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, Kennedy criticized the Republicans for blocking college aid. Public Papers, Vol. 1962, pp. 695-804.

The *New York Times* criticized the administration's faltering leadership in its postmortem editorial: "The President, who less than a year ago said federal aid to the public schools might well be the most important piece of domestic legislation, has lapsed into a strange silence." It also remarked that Kennedy's "lieutenants in Congress . . . appear just as remote from the issue as former Secretary Ribicoff, who has dropped out of the Cabinet to return to Connecticut politics."³¹

A new approach was needed. Some method had to be found either to meet the individual arguments against federal aid or, in some way, bring together enough legislative and administrative strength to pass aid legislation despite the arguments of individual pressure groups. But as Francis Keppel remarked, there was now "a bitter relationship . . . between the school people and the college people." When this was added to the hostility between "the public school people and the whole Catholic world," a renaissance of education legislation appeared distant.³²

1963: THE OMNIBUS APPROACH

President Kennedy's education package for the Eighty-eight Congress reflected the recommendations of two White House staff memoranda in November, and the counsel of HEW and the Bureau of the Budget in December 1962. A November staff memo offered a variety of possible solutions to the problem of federal aid. To counter the church-state controversy, the document suggested a return to the *Everson* formula of "aid to the child" instead of "aid to the institution." To overcome the opposition to permanent federal support it argued for the minimization of new educational programs.

³¹*New York Times*, September 4, 1962.

³²Transcript, "Francis Keppel Oral History Interview," September 18, 1964, JFKL, p. 6.

This would be accomplished by amending existing legislation and by continuing the departure began in 1962 from the language of crisis to the justification of federal aid as a catalyst for advancing social welfare and economic growth. Finally, it sought to overcome the legislative impasse by mixing popular and unpopular measures in an all-or-nothing "omnibus" bill.³³

A November 8th staff memorandum outlined the disadvantages of the previous session's incremental approach to education legislation and the advantages of the omnibus strategy. *Ad hoc* legislation had invited Kennedy's opponents and educational interests to "play off one bill against another, session after session." In an admission that the "crisis" was not selling permanent support, the document stated, "we are always behind what is needed. Hence, the pragmatic ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure is never followed." An omnibus bill, the memo continued, would not only repair these deficiencies, but would offer a "comprehensive legislative commitment" to the "dramatically" new Kennedy emphasis on social welfare and economic growth.³⁴

HEW and the Bureau of the Budget agreed on the omnibus approach, but radically disagreed on its contents. While HEW favored emphasis on categorical aid in the President's message, it advocated a return to general support in the drafting of the elementary and secondary school bill, even though it conceded that such aid would be "ineffective." The Bureau of the Budget, believing HEW's agreement of general support was due to NEA pressure, concluded"

³³An "omnibus" bill (from the Latin word *omnis*, meaning "all") is one in which several measures are combined in an effort to attract opponents of a particular bill by tying its fate to that of legislation which they support. Staff Memorandum, November 7, 1962, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-2.

³⁴Staff Memorandum, November 8, 1962, Box 33, Sorensen Papers, JFKL, pp. 4-5.

We believe that to include such a hopeless proposal as the largest and costliest one in the Administration's program adds a defeatist note to the entire package. We would prefer to drop it and to emphasize the positive selective approach.³⁵

After the administration's education debacle of 1962, Kennedy turned to an educator he knew, Harvard's Francis Keppel, who had been dean of Harvard's School of Education since 1948. Kennedy, still furious over the McMurrin resignation, was present in a highly visible White House ceremony (Justice Frankfurter was scheduled to give Keppel the oath, but he was too ill). A Yankee Episcopalian, the Harvard educated Keppel was well suited by background and temperament to mediate between the Kennedy administration and the various interest groups, especially the Catholics and the NEA, and the lower versus the higher education lobbies. In addition, as a member of the Hovde Task Force, he believed strongly in federal aid, particularly in improving the quality of weak school systems.

The new commissioner worked with Secretary Celebrezze and Wilbur Cohen in a pre-Christmas legislative strategy session in Palm Beach in December 1962. Their 1963 omnibus strategy, which drew heavily from the Bureau of the Budget's recommendations, sought to unite the bickering education lobbies behind one bill that offered something for everyone.

Kennedy also wanted Keppel to have a direct line to the Catholic Church. By early 1963, Keppel was hard at work trying to "neutralize the inside fighting in the educational world" and had opened up direct communications with Catholic interest groups. As Keppel recalled later:

³⁵McAndrews, p. 288.

They wanted me to have--they being Sorensen, and I'm perfectly sure he was reflecting the president--wanted me to have a direct communication line to the Catholic Church, which the Office of Education had never had before.³⁶

Kennedy's last education message was his best. His Special Message on Education of January 29, 1963, began with, "Education is the keystone in the arch of progress." Then he delivered the powerful argument that a permanent federal role in education was "of paramount concern to the national interest as well as to each individual."³⁷ Kennedy also followed the advice of staff memoranda as he spoke of improving the quality of American education and increasing educational opportunities and incentives for all Americans, especially the impoverished. One historian of American education, Julie Roy Jeffrey, has suggested, "the social welfare theme was there in references to ignorance, illiteracy, and unskilled workers [and] the waste of human resources that existed in the United States."³⁸

Kennedy's speech was also significant in that he made overtures to his adversaries. He attempted to move away from the partisanship and uncompromising position which had helped to undo his previous federal aid proposals. "This is not a partisan measure," said Kennedy, "and it neither includes nor rejects all of the features which have long been sought by the various educational groups and organizations."³⁹

³⁶Transcript, "Francis Keppel Oral History Interview," September 18, 1964, JFKL, pp. 8-13.

³⁷John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Education," January 29, 1963, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Vol. 1963 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 105.

³⁸Jeffrey, p. 66.

³⁹John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Education," January 29, 1963, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, Vol. 1963 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 105-114.

Contrary to his speech two years earlier, Kennedy consulted with representatives of the various educational groups and organizations.⁴⁰ Despite this, Kennedy did not expect Congress to accept the entire omnibus bill without comment. "It was perfectly clear," Keppel remarked, "that the President realized that he was sending up a package that would probably get busted up, but that if we kept the thing fluid enough, there was a chance of getting a reasonable part of it through."⁴¹

Kennedy's single omnibus bill, the proposed National Education Improvement Act of 1963 (H.R. 3000, S. 580) had three objectives: First, it sought to unify the diverse educational lobbies. Second, despite his rhetoric on aid to elementary and secondary education, the omnibus bill was politically centered on college aid. It focused on aid to higher education because it held the greatest promise of legislative success. The 1962 college-aid bill had failed in conference as a result of partisan (Republican) objections to scholarships and religious (Protestant) objections to grants to sectarian colleges. Kennedy dropped the student scholarship provision and called for construction loans only for public and private undergraduate colleges, while accepting grants for all other categories. There was also an "air of crisis" around higher education which elementary and secondary education did not possess. The "crisis" revolved around the growing number of students enrolling in the nation's colleges. It became an issue that Kennedy was able to successfully exploit. In addition, aid to higher education was less divisive which gave Kennedy greater confidence in pressing it as an issue. Though by 1963, as

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 108.

⁴¹Transcript, "Francis Keppel Oral History Interview," September 18, 1964, JFKL, pp. 13-15.

Keppel has remarked, "Kennedy was glad to pass anything."⁴² Third, after the repeated failures of the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations to pass general, across-the-board aid, the 1963 message called for "selective, stimulative, and where possible transitional" aid aimed at "strengthening, not weakening the independence of existing school systems."⁴³

Kennedy sided with the Bureau of the Budget including teachers' salaries in his general aid program, but he restricted such assistance to starting and maximum salaries, and to average salaries in economically deprived areas. While he argued for a permanent federal role in categorical programs, he recommended a temporary general aid solution to meet a temporary shortage of classrooms and teachers. But as Hugh Davis Graham has observed, the "inherent tension" between the importance of federal control "on categorical grants of funds . . . and state's rights . . . local control remained largely an abstraction at the elementary-secondary school level" during the Kennedy administration because "the inherently controversial bill never got beyond the hearing stage."⁴⁴

Despite Kennedy's weakening of the teachers' salaries provision and his abandonment of permanent federal support, both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers backed the omnibus package. As James Sundquist observed in *Politics and Policy*, "people do learn from experience."⁴⁵ The

⁴²McAndrews, p. 358.

⁴³Kennedy, "Special Message to the Congress on Education," January 29, 1963, pp. 107-108.

⁴⁴Graham, p. 45.

⁴⁵Sundquist, p. 206.

NEA had learned from its suicidal plan which had killed the higher education bill of 1962. What had the Kennedy administration learned? In 1963, Kennedy's leadership would have to match his rhetoric for elementary and secondary school aid to succeed.

Despite this, there were signs on Capitol Hill that the deadlock over elementary and secondary school assistance might be broken. On January 8th, House Republicans replaced 67-year-old Charles Halleck of Indiana with 49-year-old Gerald Ford of Michigan as chairman of the party conference. They also enlarged the Republican House Policy Committee from 33 to 36 members to include more recently elected congressmen.⁴⁶ On January 10th, Kennedy succeeded in retaining the 15-member Rules Committee by 34 more votes and with much less lobbying than in the 1961 struggle. In 1961, 62 Southern Democrats opposed Kennedy, and 22 Republicans backed him. In 1963, only 44 Southern Democrats opposed him and 28 Republicans supported him.⁴⁷ In early February, the restructured Republican House Policy Committee announced a move toward the formulation of specific party positions on all major issues in a new effort to construct compromises with the Kennedy administration.⁴⁸

Despite the opportunities presented by the Kennedy speech, greater Democratic unity, and more constructive Republican leadership, the Kennedy elementary and secondary school assistance program failed in the new Congress. The major reason was the omnibus strategy. Chairman of the House Rules Committee, "Judge" Smith, wrote to the president asking him:

⁴⁶*New York Times*, January 9, 1963.

⁴⁷*Congressional Record*, January 10, 1963, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁸*New York Times*, February 2, 1963.

To lead the Congress out of the maze of . . . existing and proposed programs for aid to public education so that . . . we may be able to have . . . a clear picture of all that is proposed and expected . . . during this Congress.⁴⁹

The administration responded with a letter stating, " . . . the primary purpose of sending to the Congress an omnibus education measure was to reduce the number of bills to be considered."⁵⁰

If the administration sought clarity, Congress thought otherwise. Republican Representative Charles Goodell of New York remarked:

The sooner we jump off this omnibus, the better, because it is headed for a crackup; you are just going to divide the ranks of the supporters, unite the ranks of the opposition.⁵¹

Chairman Adam Clayton Powell reluctantly introduced the bill to his committee: "This bill as it is now before us might not come out of the Committee on Education and Labor . . . and if it did, would be emasculated on the floor of the House or in conference."⁵² Thereafter, Powell referred to it as the "ominous bill."⁵³ Democratic Representative Edith Green of Oregon, who supported elementary and secondary school aid but wanted college aid first, remarked, "I am really at a loss to understand the omnibus approach, of which I have not heard any member of Congress say it was politically feasible."⁵⁴ No

⁴⁹Education Legislation, White House Central Files, Box 472, March 22, 1963, JFKL.

⁵⁰Ibid, April 4, 1963.

⁵¹"National Education Improvement Act: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives," 88th Congress, 1st Session, February 4-27, 1963, p. 196.

⁵²Ibid, p. 2.

⁵³McAndrews, p. 293.

⁵⁴"National Education Improvement Act: Hearings, House of Representatives," p. 148.

figure in Washington was more committed to the passage of the higher education bill, or pursued it in the way Green did. Yet neither Green nor any other Democrat displayed that same type of tenacity on elementary and secondary education.⁵⁵ Green, along with Chairman Powell and other representatives in the House agreed that the omnibus approach had no chance of success. They asked the administration to set up priorities for various sections of the bill.⁵⁶

The overall response to the omnibus bill by the press was negative. On February 1, 1963, the *New York Times* greeted the proposal with enthusiasm as "a radically new approach that concentrated on incentives for quality improvement." However, the *Times* conceded the call for transitional aid that would be phased out "runs counter to the realities of public life and may be nothing more than sugar coating on the budgetary pill."⁵⁷ *Time*, in its editorial of February 8th, attacked the President's new approach. The President touched every level of education, from preschool to graduate school, in an attempt to get the legislation passed "at one gulp."⁵⁸ The magazine predicted Congress would "try to untie the big package" and pass particular bills.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Mrs. Green's pursuit of her goal terrified the Kennedy administration. The President found her very difficult on the question of breaking up the omnibus bill and avoided dealing with her directly. Francis Keppel recalled one meeting where the President said, "Well, now, Cohen, you haven't succeeded with her and Sorensen hasn't, Keppel is a new boy in town, and it's his turn." Transcript, "Frances Keppel Oral History Interview, September 18, 1964, JFKL, P. 10.

⁵⁶"National Education Improvement Act: Hearings, House of Representatives," pp. 86, 90, 104.

⁵⁷*New York Times*, February 1, 1963.

⁵⁸"One Big Gulp," *Time* (February 8, 1963), p. 49.

⁵⁹*Ibid*, p. 49. For a good breakdown on the possibilities of passage for each section of the omnibus measure, see "Kennedy's Latest Plan for Aid to Schools," *U.S. News & World Report* (February 11, 1963), p. 60.

Several other newspapers, while expressing sympathy for federal aid, attacked Kennedy's strategy. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote: "The main trouble is that the new measure is so complex and unwieldy that no one can be quite sure what it will cost, or where it will lead." The *Detroit Free Press* maintained that "by putting all his requests . . . into the same almost surely doomed package, the President is resorting to political grandstanding." The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* declared, "the new program has its merits and it deserves to be analyzed on that basis rather than condemned out of hand. . . . But . . . the chances for enactment cannot be good."⁶⁰

The administration still believed it had presented the best possible plan. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Anthony Celebrezze, said the bill addressed itself "to the entire complex of needs in American education." It was up to the Congress to accept all of it, reject all of it, or accept parts of it, but the administration would continue to fight for the entire bill.⁶¹

As the legislative session progressed, the omnibus approach lost ground. While Congressional leaders agreed that prospects were good on some elements of the bill, many members complained that they were being inundated with too many proposals without any indication of the administration's priorities. Many agreed, however, that aid to elementary and secondary schools was considered unlikely.⁶²

It was not until May 22nd that the White House abandoned the omnibus approach and consented to split the omnibus bill. Kennedy agreed to the division of the package

⁶⁰"Selection of Editorial Comments on President's Education Bill," February 8, 1963, White House Central Files, Box 473, JFK Papers, JFKL, pp. 3, 7.

⁶¹"National Education Improvement Act: Hearings, House of Representatives," pp. 61-85.

⁶²*New York Times*, May 3, 1963.

into four bills: higher education, impacted area schools, elementary and secondary schools, and the remaining categorical program combined into a single bill--extension of the NDEA, vocational education, adult education, special handicapped education, university extension, library services, educational quality, and cooperative research. Five long months had passed since Kennedy's education message. It was time lost to Kennedy's inability to come up with a bipartisan approach to get the elementary and secondary school bill passed.

While the omnibus package deprived the Kennedy elementary and secondary education program of vital momentum, it also permitted the religious issue to gather strength. Monsignor Frederick Hochwalt, director of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), presented a detailed analysis of the dilemma the omnibus approach caused for many Roman Catholics. He felt the administration was forcing an unfair choice upon his Church either to accept or reject the bill in its entirety.⁶³ Monsignor Hochwalt also believed the bill "discriminated" against parochial schools as previous measures had done. He urged that the omnibus package be divided into separate bills distinguishing higher education from elementary and secondary schools.

The issue of religion on elementary and secondary school aid had 1963 taking on the appearance of the 1961 struggle. 1961's religious witnesses paraded before the Congressional committees. The press again seized the issue. And, by autumn, Kennedy was reenacting his unproductive 1961 strategy of negotiating with the NCWC.

There was also an important difference to 1963. Prominent Catholic liberal Democratic Congressmen raised their voices in defense of Catholic school children. It

⁶³"National Education Improvement Act: Hearings, House of Representatives," pp. 920-921, 960-963.

remained unlikely that these voices would be translated into votes against the public school bill which they were committed to. But their numbers greatly reduced the chance of a federal aid roll call, while increasing the incentive for delay.

The civil rights movement also influenced the administration's education package. President Kennedy realized the controversy over segregated schools could defeat his omnibus bill. But as one historian of the Kennedy presidency, Jim Heath, has noted, "Kennedy's early approach to civil rights was basically reactive, not creative."⁶⁴

In May, a national television audience watched police dogs and firehoses scatter peaceful black demonstrators protesting racial segregation in the public facilities of Birmingham, Alabama. Personal intervention by Kennedy on May 8th helped bring peace to the streets. But bombings of the Birmingham home of Martin Luther King, as well as the Gaston Hotel, headquarters of the leadership of the protest, re-ignited the violence. Kennedy ordered federal troops into the city. On May 13th, Kennedy telegraphed Alabama Governor George Wallace, promising to withhold deployment of the troops as long as "the citizens of Birmingham themselves will maintain standards of conduct that will make outside intervention unnecessary."⁶⁵ But no sooner had one crisis ended than another seemed imminent when Wallace stood in the doorway of the administration building of the University of Alabama vowing to prevent the admission of two black students. It was a threat rendered idle by Kennedy's federalization of the Alabama National Guard, yet it had forced a confrontation with the administration.

⁶⁴Heath, p. 73.

⁶⁵Telegram from Kennedy to Governor George Wallace, May 13, 1963, President's Office Files, Box 96, JFK Papers, JFKL.

On May 17th, the House Education Subcommittee unanimously voted to add a desegregation rider to the impacted aid portion of the Kennedy education package.⁶⁶ Ten days later, the Supreme Court, in a unanimous ruling on a Memphis, Tennessee, case, warned against "indefinite delay" in school desegregation. "The basic guarantees of our Constitution are warrants for the here and now," wrote Kennedy appointee Arthur Goldberg for the majority, "and unless there is an overwhelmingly compelling reason, they are to be promptly fulfilled."⁶⁷

It was in this atmosphere of political prodding, public awareness, and judicial advice that Kennedy surged forward on civil rights. On May 18th, he told a predominantly white audience at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee that the civil rights struggle is "in the highest tradition of American freedom."⁶⁸ Kennedy's June 6th speech to the graduating class at San Diego State College noted that "segregation in education, and I mean *de facto* segregation of the North as well as the proclaimed segregation of the South, brings with it serious handicaps to a large proportion of our nation's population."⁶⁹ Kennedy spent the next two weeks attracting bipartisan support for his civil rights initiatives.

Four developments in June served notice that Kennedy's vigorous move toward civil rights was to be separate from his education package. The first was the civil rights address itself, delivered June 11, 1963. In it, Kennedy urged Congress to "authorize the

⁶⁶*New York Times*, May 18, 1963.

⁶⁷*New York Times* May 28, 1963.

⁶⁸John F. Kennedy, "Remarks in Nashville at the 90th Anniversary Convocation of Vanderbilt University," May 18, 1963, *Public Papers*, Vol. 1963, p. 408.

⁶⁹John F. Kennedy, "Commencement Address at San Diego College," June 6, 1963, *Public Papers*, Vol. 1963, p. 447.

Federal Government to participate more fully in lawsuits designed to end segregation in public education."⁷⁰ Significantly, this was a request not contained in his education message. The second was a June 22nd speech by Commissioner Keppel to the American Council on Education's Conference on Federal Programs in which he asserted that a cure for the nation's educational problems would have to await a resolution of its racial inequities.⁷¹ The third was a June 24th federal court ruling upholding the Kennedy Administration's new policy of withholding federal monies from racially segregated impacted area school districts.⁷²

A final sign of the Administration's formal line between civil rights and federal aid was Kennedy's personal intervention in the kind of vigorous campaign of interest group consultation and public awareness which his education program had sorely lacked. On June 19th, the President met with representatives of private and public schools and urged them to: (a) prepare for desegregation in their schools, (b) help combat *de facto* Northern segregation, (c) inaugurate or expand education programs to "deprived" youth and adults, (d) organize local conferences to discuss desegregation, and (e) encourage desegregation through their teaching and participation on biracial commissions.⁷³

Kennedy's determination to see enactment of his battered education bill was clearly different than his belated commitment to civil rights. The defiance of George Wallace and the televised images of police dogs and fire hoses at Birmingham served

⁷⁰John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," June 11, 1963, *Public Papers*, Vol. 1963, p. 470.

⁷¹*New York Times*, June 22, 1963.

⁷²*Ibid*, June 25, 1963.

⁷³"Meeting of the President with Religious Leaders," June 17, 1963, White House Central Files, Box 97, JFK Papers, JFKL, pp. 1-21.

to create a wave of moral outrage which swept the country. The televised brutality represented a collective event which in turn set the president angrily against the racists. When Kennedy condemned racial injustice in 1963, his presidency gained a high moral ground it had not anticipated. In the fight for aid to elementary and secondary education, Kennedy came to resent the succession of legislative defeats and was determined to meet the expectations of the Democratic coalition that would be needed to reelect him.

A final obstacle to the success of elementary and secondary school aid in 1963 was Kennedy himself. Despite its eloquence, the 1963 Kennedy message on education contained the drawbacks which crippled his earlier initiatives. Despite his statements of non-partisanship, Kennedy never asked for Republican advice in the formulation of the bill and no significant Republican help for its passage. It was a bipartisan strategy which helped send Kennedy's civil rights bill through the House Judiciary Committee and helped pass higher education legislation in 1963. But no such cooperation accompanied the elementary and secondary school aid bill. The result was a continuation of Democratic inflexibility and Republican negativism which had destroyed the Kennedy bills in 1961.

Historian and adviser to Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, maintains the President, "despite those fourteen years in Congress, had always been something of an alien on the Hill."⁷⁴ This had been especially true in the House where he had maintained little contact with the leadership. Even in the Senate, "he had never been one of the cloakroom boys."⁷⁵ Without the advantages of a bipartisan approach, Kennedy could not reach the moderates and liberals of both parties on the questions of permanent

⁷⁴Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., p. 652.

⁷⁵Ibid, p. 652.

federal support and teachers' salaries. Despite his 1961 experience and the emergency of citizen's committees recommending a bipartisan solution, Kennedy resisted co-authoring an elementary and secondary education program.

Kennedy never brought the kind of activism to the issue of public school aid which proved so effective for higher education on the 1962 campaign trail and in his effort to move civil rights legislation from the House Judiciary Committee in 1963. At the time of his death, the elementary and secondary school bill was stalled in the Education Subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee. The absence of aggressive executive leadership during the previous two years contributed to 1963's legislative obstacles, the result of which left a vacuum Kennedy had not filled at the time of his death. The dean of American journalists, Walter Lippmann, said of Kennedy:

One of his two or three serious weaknesses as a popular leader, is that he does not want to be unpopular anywhere . . . with anyone, and I think that a public leader at times . . . has to get into a struggle where somebody gets a bloody nose.⁷⁶

While Lippmann's observations could be disputed with regard to Kennedy's performance in other areas, it does provide an accurate description of Kennedy's role in the elementary and secondary school aid legislation.

By the end of the year, the college-aid bill, vocational and medical education, as well as aid to exceptional children, removal of the impacted area assistance, and the National Defense Education Act had become law. President Johnson hailed the Eighty-

⁷⁶Walter Lippmann Interviewed by Charles Collingwood," *New Republic* 148 (May 18, 1963), p. 16.

eighth Congress as the "Education Congress" as a tribute to his slain predecessor.⁷⁷ Johnson pledged to complete the elementary and secondary school aid bill of the original Kennedy program in 1964.

I, therefore strongly urge the Congress to take early positive action on the unfinished portion of the National Education Improvement Act, particularly those programs which will assist elementary and secondary schools.⁷⁸

President Johnson had stressed the theme of national unity and continuity with Kennedy's legislative program when he addressed a joint session of Congress five days after Kennedy's assassination. But as Hugh Davis Graham has suggested, Johnson's pledge to fight for public school aid in 1964 "was more rhetoric than real . . . 1964 was an election year, *his* election year, and he had no intention of ensnarling himself in yet another bloody church-state fight while simultaneously battling for the civil rights bills."⁷⁹

John Kennedy believed as he entered the White House that the nation had reached a consensus on domestic politics. In *The Unraveling of America*, historian Alan Matusow describes why people supported Kennedy, "not because he was extraordinary but because he might be—not for his achievement but for his promise."⁸⁰ In the struggle for aid to elementary and secondary education, the New Frontier was charted but never fully explored.

⁷⁷Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks Upon Signing the Higher Education Facilities Act," December 16, 1963, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson*, Vol. 1963-64, Book I (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 57.

⁷⁸"Remarks of the President Upon Signing H.R. 6143: The Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963," Sorensen Papers, Box 33, JFKL.

⁷⁹Graham, p. 52.

⁸⁰Alan Matusow, *The Unraveling of America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 14.

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